

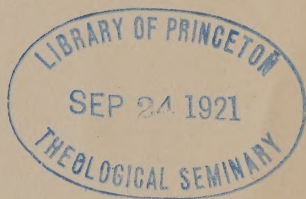
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SERMONS BY THE REV.
JOSEPH ✓ PARKER, D.D.

VOLUME IV.

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These sermons have been printed from the reporter's notes. Probably not a sentence was written beforehand. This will account for irregularity and roughness, and apparent want of punctuation, in the style. Those who heard the discourses will be able to read them according to the preacher's intention.

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[*Thursday Morning, June 28th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we come to Thee in the name of Jesus Christ Thy Son, without whom there is no prayer. He is our propitiation, our advocate, our high priest, our only priest. It is enough ; in His sufficiency we abound in strength ; because He is strong we shall prevail. We do not live in our own strength, but in the strength of Jesus Christ, whose arm is almighty, whose heart is all-tender. We have heard of the sting, we have heard of death, we have heard of the law, so weak, so strong, but we have also heard of Jesus Christ Thy Son our Saviour, and He gives the victory as He gives the morning star. He gives all things ; we have nothing that we have not received at the Lord's right hand, even the hand of Jesus Christ pierced through for our sins, bleeding that our guilt might be taken away. It is a wondrous call in which we stand, an infinite election ; yet dost Thou whisper to us, Take heed lest ye fall ; beware lest your feet slip and your knees give way and ye be found thrown down. How wondrous ! We may not trifle with Thy strength ; we must obey Thy law if we would avail ourselves of Thine almightiness. Yet by grace we stand, by grace we are saved. It is a wondrous eye of light shining through a darkening storm ; it gives us light and hope and joy, and already through Jesus Christ our Lord we have taunted death and sung our song at the mouth of the grave. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Amen.

HOPE AND SERVICE.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."—I COR. xv. 58.



WE could not work if we thought our labour was in vain, was void or empty, even though we sealed it with the Lord's name in some professional and mechanical way. The soul can only work in hope and through hope; the soul cannot work in dejection and want of confidence and darkness. The apostle has been speaking much about the doctrine of resurrection; he does not think that we can apprehend the doctrine of resurrection all at once. What doctrine is there that we can accept and understand in a moment? We must have time, we must be educated, that is to say, drawn out little by little, a step at a time: the great point is that we should be drawn out in the right direction; it is of infinite consequence that we should be moving along the right line. The great mischief would be if we were on the wrong line; then progress would be hastening ruin. It is not enough to advance, we must be perfectly sure that we are advancing along the right line. The Scriptures do not expect us to understand them all at once; certainly we are not expected to understand the Deity at any time. Who can by searching find out God? We may lay hold of Him by some parable or hint or symbol; in that sense the mustard-seed is the tree. He who knows one blade of grass aright has already begun to pray. It is so dreadful to remember that some persons expect us to do everything at once, to understand God, to have a sufficient and enduring and unchangeable theory of the constitution of the Trinity. We cannot have this except by slow growth, steady, patient continuance in prayer and thought and service. If we want to know God we have begun to know Him. It is the same with this doctrine of the resurrection. Paul knows he is exciting the curiosity of those to whom he is addressing himself; he says, in effect, I

know that all this statement will be besieged by questions of many kinds; some man will say, How? some man will try to spoil the letter. That "some man" is still living, and we water him as we would water a noxious plant, and therefore we keep the heresy and the difficulty always before us: whereas we might out-root it and outgrow it by faith and service. Some man will say, How will the dead be raised up? Some man will say, With what body will they come? I know that this statement of mine to you Corinthians will not be allowed to go without challenge and without questioning; but be assured of this, that if you get hold of the idea that God can do all things, and that His purpose is to work all things to the method and the music of His will, then all the little, trivial, frivolous questions will drop off like dead flies, and you shall see the Lord's purpose, and stretch your wings in a holy endeavour to fly with it in all the mystery of its movement.

How then does the Lord come to us in the matter of the revelation of the doctrine of rising again from the dead? The Lord has one great way of coming; the Lord comes by parable, by symbol, by little insufficient parallels and analogies; yet He always says to us, Do not make too much of these; there is falsehood in exaggeration; go no further than the parable invites you to go, for the parable simply indicates the direction and tells you to move along that high and ever-heightening line. This is the method of Jesus Christ; He cannot tell us poor finite struggling creatures the whole mystery of God and His purpose, but He says, The kingdom of God is like unto— After that we have to study the symbol or picture, always taking care not to drive it with vehemence and feverish excitement, but to wait where it waits, and to look up where it looks up, and to avoid what it avoids, leaving the mystery, yet partially illuminating it. Are we in the divine school, poor little infirm purblind scholars? Enough to be in it! The question is not how far we have got in our learning, but are we learning of the right teacher, are we in the right mood, and are we reading the right book? After that, I repeat, all matters of detail and mutability will arrange and adjust themselves to the main purpose of

the revelation of the kingdom whose throne is an everlasting throne.

It is so that the apostle deals with this doctrine of the resurrection. He says, The resurrection is like unto this little green bud in April. He does not say, This is the resurrection, but, This is a parable of the rising-again; all these black branches have been sleeping under the snow for a month or two or more, but now there is a warmth in the air, there is a sense of awakening life, and the kingdom of the resurrection is like this little green bud. But does one bud make the spring? Yes, it does. They say one swallow does not make a summer. They lie. The swallow makes no mistakes about the summer; if you have seen one, you have seen all; if you have seen one real living green blade, you have seen the spring, and he who has seen the spring has seen the summer with all her chaplet and all her flowing robe of beauty, and has felt on his cheek the soft breath of her mouth. We make a great mistake in not enlarging the parables. There are some little proverb-makers who are absolutely anonymous, and who are less than ever known the moment they announce their names, who say that one swallow does not make a summer. It is a gross and unpoetical, not to say absurd, report and statement. He who has seen one swallow may come home bearing his sheaves with him rejoicingly, and say to the family who has not seen that bird of spring, The spring is here; children, the spring has come! How know you that, father of us all? Because I have seen one swallow, and the other swallows are all here, though I cannot see them yet; mayhap before the week is out the air will darken with their wings. Just so, says the apostle, it is with this resurrection; all things looked dead a month ago; there was nothing but blackness in the garden and in the wood; there was not one single little green leaf to be seen on all the barren branches; but to-day I have seen a bud, not a blossom, one little leaf has struggled through the black sheath, I can take you to see it; therefore if you can sing, you can now sing and raise the anthem high, for the Lord hath come and winter is abashed at His presence. The apostle further goes on to say, You see this little black thing hanging on

the wall? Yes: what is this little black thing, O thou parable-reading apostle? Wait a little time; that little black thing will presently be like the prison door thrown open, and out of it there will come a winged thing far more lovely than any painter's brush could have made it, and we will say concerning that flying piece of sunshine, It is not made with hands; to touch that fine art is to destroy the bloom and the beauty. O those rough fingers! they cannot touch the bloom of a peach without destroying it. As, the apostle continues, this beautiful winged creature has come out of that black hole or out of that dark prison, even so shall the resurrection, the old and the new, the exhausted and the initial and the poetical; even so—Do not drive the parallel too far; do not spoil the analogy by exaggerating it or compelling it to do what it was never intended to attempt; but accept the parallel. As the butterfly came out of that poor little home, so shall thy better self clothe its nakedness with a house that is from heaven. There is a natural beauty and there is a spiritual beauty, and all things are growing and growing to higher meanings and wider applications. O man, believe it, and stand up a host a thousand strong in the almightiness of God!

And hast thou some nearer, dearer parable by which to explain this mystery of thine? Then the apostle takes us into the sleeping-room and asks us to step noiselessly because the cherub babes are lying in the white soft bed; then the apostle says to us, Presently unconsciousness will become consciousness; you will see the eyelids quiver, the breath will change a little in its throb, the sweet dimpled hands will make some show and sign of returning energy; there, the child is awake: even so is the resurrection of the kingdom of God. There is a sleeping time, a time of unconsciousness, a time when we have no longer any self that we are aware of, and presently the eyes open, and it is as if the universe were created for their gratification:—"Behold, I will make all things new." The universe was there when the little children fell asleep for a few hours; they have not been aware of its exhaustion, now they return to see, and behold the light of the morning and the joy of the day; even so shall it be with the resurrection

of the dead. Let them fall asleep in Christ, let them slumber on His heart; He will know when the awakening time is due. All things are in His hand; let Him alone; He will bring in the kingdom, and fail not.

The apostle, having lifted up our minds into these high figures and prophecies, says, Now let us return to our work :—"Therefore." "Therefore" in this instance is an emphatic word; it brings together lines and threads of reasoning and illustration, and it presents the whole argument in the form of business, activity, service. Therefore, because all these things shall be, because we shall triumph over the grave and taunt the enemy that we feared; therefore, up, work, serve, repeat all you have done for God through Christ with a heartier energy and a fuller sufficiency of strength and enthusiasm. Hope is to end in service, is to be the very inspiration of service, and is to be the guarantee of the reward of service. Christianity with its high levels, its great wide firmaments and great doctrine, has also its earthly duties, its domesticities, its neighbourliness, its willingness to help and bless all within reach. This is the test of all true religion. When you have read all the great books representing the faiths of the world, all the poetry of India, and all the mysteries of other religions, the question you ought to put at the close of your reading is, What do these things amount to? what do they want me to do? I have listened to enchanting poetry, I have been amazed at the capacity and the strength and passion of all this poetry; but now, in a word, what does it want me to do? Is this religion a scented vapour? I have inhaled fragrance, and I have been pleased to do so, but does this religion want me to do anything except to sit down and admire itself, and say, How poetical, how ideal, how really lovely, and how full of music and divers intellectual enchantment? Does it want me to fight any foes? does it want me to grow? does it want me to do good to any living soul? If you can answer, Yes, then in that degree the religion is likely to be true, for it wants to help and bless and elevate mankind. In the Christian religion we have no time to ask any such questions; Christianity is down upon

us at once with its Go—Heal—Preach—Help—Give. It is a stirring religion, it is not a sitting-down religion; it is full of warfare for the good and the right, it is full of charity for the necessitous, it is full of challenge to its believers to go out and open prison-doors and preach the acceptable year of the Lord and to do a great anointing work. It says, Go and preach this dear Gospel doctrine to every creature; stop the poorest man and pay your debt of love to him. This religion of Christ, then, is very likely to be right. It does not invite me to enjoy myself, it invites me to shoulder a cross; it does not say, Now that I have revealed this beautiful doctrine to thee, O soul of man, sit down and be thankful and enjoy thyself in the woods and gardens of God. It offers no luxuries of that kind; it says, after its biggest, grandest argument, "Therefore"—what?—"always abounding in the work of the Lord." Argue as much as you like (but the less the better) provided that your argument ends in a "Therefore" kindred to the "Therefore" of this text:—"be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Some of us would rather play at logic than do that. Some of us have in our religion great bank-holidays. There are no bank-holidays in Christianity; it is the cross, the knife, the spear, the blood, the loss, the love, the coming back to attend to the man whom in our pride and insolence we left bleeding on the road. So Christianity is not mere rhapsody; the teaching of the Apostle Paul is not religion made difficult in words. The difficulty of the Christian religion is in service, in hard work, in doing more to-day than we did yesterday, abundantly, like wave chasing wave and billow followed by billow. This religion is not likely to be popular; it cannot be popular until the Spirit in all its fulness of power and grace has been realised and is being enjoyed as the most honoured guest of the soul.

The sublimest argument ends in service. A congregation dispersing and commenting on the poetry of the service has received little or no good: an assembly dispersing in silence, or with expressions of voice and general manner indicating a purpose to do in the strength and grace of God more than ever, has received the Gospel in its right spirit. Do not praise the argu-

ment except you take heartily the whole meaning, the whole distress and agony, the whole hope and joy of the application. A sermon that has no application is a sermon that cannot possibly do any good. The Fathers were mighty in the application of the discourse. They cared little or nothing as to the formal structure; they did not spend their time on the exordium and the elaborate homiletic distribution of parts as if they were preaching to a number of cabinet-makers, but they seemed to hasten after due and reverent exposition to the final word, the true peroration—"Therefore" fight, be strong, be good, be men. Has the modern sermon lost its application? If the sublimest argument ends in service, then service is itself the sublimest argument. You may be great logicians without knowing a single dictum in formal logic; you may be surprised to find what close and cogent reasoners you are. You smile at the notion of your ever constructing what is called a syllogism, you would graciously deny the intended compliment. In doing so you may be perfectly right; yet I point you to another view of the case: If the sublimest argument ends in service, service is itself the sublimest argument that you can lay before the human mind. You syllogise by results, you formalise by facts. This is the true way of reasoning in great moral problems and issues. If you can bring a converted man into your argument with the unbeliever, the case of the unbeliever is thereby shattered. The unbeliever may be verbally a stronger man than you are, he may know many long words, he may confound the innocent and the simple by phrases that sound as if they were part of a foreign tongue; but if the believer can say, This man will tell his own tale, and if that man shall say, I was blind, but now I see, I was far away from all things beautiful and holy, I was a persecutor, and I was an alien and an outcast, I was without hope, and without joy, but this friend told me about Jesus; at first I reviled his teaching, I called it preaching, canting, but by-and-by what he said got into my heart, and I have become thereby a new creature; I hate all the things I used to love, I find my joy where I never found it before; I see the meaning of the Cross of Christ, and I am a new creature in Christ Jesus the Son of God; I cannot argue with you, but I know that my temper

is different, my whole disposition is changed, I have been as it were born again;—such a testimony is better than all the verbal wrangling of unbelief. It was so in the old time when the high priests would have condemned Peter and John, but they said to one another, The case would have been perfectly simple, gentlemen, but there is this nuisance of a man healed; if you could get at that man and get him wholly off the floor we should make short work of these unlearned and ignorant men; but there is the man, the man that was lame from his mother's womb and who was laid daily at the beautiful gate of the temple, walking, leaping, praising God, as strong and agile as any among us: O if we could get rid of him! But he, that same restored man, is the difficulty of all unbelief, and is one of the strongest guarantees of the power of the Christian faith.

The great inspiration of service is hope, and that hope we find in the great argument of the Apostle Paul in this very chapter. There is not one pessimistic tone in the whole argument. The apostle faces his great subject and conquers it by the grace of Christ. He says, I am going to talk, not about death only, but about resurrection; not about the law only, but about Christ; and I will show you how we have all the promises on our side, and I am going to sound a long rousing bugle note that will call men back from their pessimism and their distress and give them heart again. If you have no hope you cannot work with any real good and lasting effect. A preacher cannot do so if he is preaching to indifferent people. The merchantman cannot be his true and strongest self if he is always on the sunless side of the wall. Put into a man the spirit of hope, and you give him strength, nerve, assurance that all will be right by-and-by. Why, farmer, have you thrown all your seed into the ground? Yes. And you have not a handful of seed left? Not one. Why, you must be a down-hearted man this night? Nay, says he, I am a cheerful man; I have put the seed in the right place, I have laid it to rest for a time under the right conditions; if you will come back in such and such number of months you will see a golden harvest, you will see a great result; I am poor only for to-night, I

will begin with to-morrow morning's sun to grow rich again. And the mariner puts away from the shore, and he is going to leave all his friends behind; he is a brave man, he says, I go to other shores to find what I want so far as the body is concerned in all its commercial relations; it is only good-bye to-night or this morning; in a few weeks I will return, and we shall have a time of song, a holy feast and wine of God. What did the invalid say? she looks better to-day, I think; there is a smile or ghost of a smile upon that wan face. What has happened? Oh, the doctor has been here. And what said he? He said she has got the turn—the turn!

Sixty-two years ago to-day the Queen was crowned. We have been together just half her glorious reign. God save the Queen! Long live the Queen! Our heart's prayers go out towards her when we think of her age, her dignity, her sorrow, and her wondrous example in all virtues domestic and public.

A great number of friends are coming to London to hold a Convention under the name of the Christian Endeavour movement. Let us give them a most cordial and sympathetic welcome. They are doing a great and good and lasting work; they shall have our prayers and sympathy in all their deliberations. We have a Christian Endeavour Society in this church, of which I am hearing good news almost every week. Let our friends coming from abroad feel themselves at home here. In Christ Jesus there is no more any stranger or foreigner; there is only a great household of faith.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the Triune God abide with us, enabling us to prove our doctrine by our service. Amen.

Hymn 55: "Begin, my tongue, some heavenly theme."

Hymn 238: .. "To-day, the Saviour calls."

SOLO "Awake, awake, O heart of mine" .. *Sweeney*

MISS MONIMIA TWIST.

DOXOLOGY.

[*Sunday Morning, July 1st, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou knowest our frame, Thou rememberest that we are but dust; Thou hast pity upon our weakness, and our sighing is as a prayer unto the heart of God. The air is full of farewells, the wind is alive with the sighing of hearts that are ill at ease. Thou knowest the mystery of sorrow, Thou canst come to us with herbs from Thine own garden, Thou canst give us recovery and hope and joy. We bless Thee that we are called upon to rejoice in the Lord and to rejoice alway, and that a voice says, Again I say, Rejoice. If Thou wilt lift up upon us the shining of Thy countenance, we shall answer Thee with gladness of heart. Who can sing the Lord's song by strange rivers? who can fail to answer God's love in God's house? We bless Thee that we are within the four walls of the sanctuary; no ravenous beast shall be there, nor shall any lion go up thereon, but it shall be a house of security and calm and deepest sense of restfulness, and Thy people shall know that they have come into the inheritance of Thy peace. The Lord give us the stillness of faith which is its truest triumph; give us such a sense of Thine own nearness that we shall see naught but Thyself and those hidden in the glory of Thine own love. We bless Thee that from the beginning Thou hast declared Thyself a God of mercy and pity, a God longsuffering and kind; Thy love was revealed from the first, Eden was Thy heaven; Thou hast revealed Thyself to us as a God angry with sin, but ready to forgive on the first show of repentance. Give us penitent hearts that are broken down with conscious sin, and may we fear and tremble whilst we think of the sin, and then rise and be glad, yea, even shout for very joy because of the love, the redeeming, all-redeeming, all-cleansing love. In that love may we live, for there is life nowhere else. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so was the Son of man lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish. Lord, we thank Thee for the lifting-up, we bless Thee that we are released from the fear of destruction, we thank Thee that we can begin a new life, immortal and all-blessed. We have come to thank Thee for all family mercies, for all honourable success in business, for health, for the continuance of all our best powers; this is the Lord's daily miracle of condescension and patience. Let the Lord be nearer

and nearer to us, yea, let the Lord be nearer to us than we can be to ourselves ; then shall we have security and peace and sense of things coming from heaven with great revelations of light and possibility. Look upon all sad hearts, upon all weary, disappointed lives, upon souls whose ambitions are dead and who have almost ceased to pray and to hope. And look upon all young life, all opening flowers, all sweet dreams of early years ; and then look upon those whose lives are behind them, a long way behind them, who think no more of openings, opportunities, and possibilities within the sphere of time, but who yet have a secret confidence that they shall enter into a rest heavenly and not to be disturbed. May we comfort one another with these words, seeing we find them all in the heart of Him who died for us and rose again, and who is now taking up our poor feeble supplications and turning them into prevalent prayer. Amen.

XCII.

THE SERPENT LIFTED UP.

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."—JOHN iii. 14.



HE old is always becoming the new. "As Moses . . . so the Son of man" ; as the old, so the new ; as the historical, so the prophetic. All the pattern of the spiritual temple has been shown in the mountain, and has been frayed out in shapely and significant clouds which themselves were parables. "That the Scripture might be fulfilled." History always has something to do more than it seems to have ; it does not only record the event of the day, it redeems old subjects, old vows and oaths ; it takes up what seems to be the exhausted past and turns it into the present and energetic action of the moment. *As Moses, As Jonah, As Solomon, As the bold Esaias* ; it is always a going-back upon the sacred past and eating up the food that was there provided. Do not live too much in what we call the present ; do not live upon

the bubble of the hour; have some city of the mind, some far-away strong temple-sanctuary made noble by associations and memories of the tenderest kind. You could easily be dislodged from some sophism of yesterday. If you are living in the little programmes that were published but last night you have but a poor lodgment, and to-morrow you will be found naked, destitute, and hungry. Always go back to the *As Moses*, *As David*, *As Daniel*, *As Jeremiah*, and see in every culminating event a confirmation of this holy word—"that the Scripture might be fulfilled." The plan was drawn before the building was commenced; the specification was all written out before the builder handled his hammer and his trowel; we do but work out old specifications,—old, but not decayed; old with the venerableness of truth. See that you stand upon a broad rock, and do not try to launch your lifeship upon a bubble.

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness." What serpent was that? I have read of many serpents—the serpent subtler than any beast of the field; the brazen serpent; the fiery flying serpent; that old serpent the devil. But sometimes the serpent is found in unlikely places. I thought it an unlikely place when I encountered the serpent in the garden, in Eden, in the sunny paradise in which all young life seems to open. "The serpent in the wilderness"; that is rough rhyme; these words belong to one another; but serpent in the garden—who ever suspected such a concatenation of terms? What have these terms to do with one another? Serpent I can understand as being in the hot rock or under the bushes of the wilderness, the bushes so bare and barren; but serpent in the garden! What is the size of the garden? Big as the whole life. Every life begins in a garden. Some of the gardens are poor enough, but there is a touch of garden about all infant life; the infant life itself is a bud, a piece of a garden, a green banneret that might float over a whole paradise. Can we not have a garden without a serpent? Not under the sun. Can we not have a garden without a sepulchre? No; be thankful that there is a garden round about the sepulchre. Do not look at the sepulchre only and say, See here,

this is death, this is misery, this is intolerable sorrow. That is not the right point of view at all; you should see the grave, and then say, But look at the garden, at the flowers, at the hanging trees; look at all the floral imagery, look at all the growing parable. That is the right standpoint; and, occupying the right standpoint in the right spirit, you will overcome the grave, and treat its victory as you would treat a trifle.

Yet the serpent is in the garden, is in the bank, in the balance, in all the riches, in all the wine-cellars, in all the gathered luxuries. You cannot see it, but you feel it; you can hardly put the occasion into fit words, yet you are quite sure that there is something—is it a gnawing, an aching? is it a tremor? is it something of the nature of a ghostly shade? It is something that indicates that we are still in the region of the enemy. If this be so I must be on my guard, I must be alive, sober, vigilant; the serpent may be where I least suspect him, he may be hiding under the fairest trees and flowers. Is there no rest? Not much. Is there no time of relaxation of discipline? None. That makes life very stern and disciplinary. Quite true; and that is what life should be accepted as. We are in a school, we are in a barracks, we are in a battlefield, we are surrounded by enemies mightier than we are. They can go into smaller bulk, they can make less noise; the tsetse fly can kill a bullock and make no excitement; one evil thought may ruin your soul. O man! awake! 'tis high time to awake; there is not a moment allotted in the Divine providence to forgetfulness and slumber and false peace.

What is the nature of the serpent? The nature of the serpent is to destroy. It cannot rest so long as one stone of the character is upon another. The serpent cannot rest until it has poisoned the whole life. Evil never built anything; evil always pulls down, upsets, destroys. The bite of a serpent is death. May we not play with the serpent? We may not. Are there not moments when the cruel beast is not cruel? Not one. The sandwasp paralyses the beetle with his sting that he may and that his pro-

geny may profit by the paralysis. The sandwasp does not kill the insect, but thrusts a sting into him, not fatally; the insect can still lay eggs for the advantage of the progeny of the sandwasp. It is so with many serpentine tricks; we are paralysed to be used, not to-day, but to be eaten in six months. We are so paralysed that we will do this or do that and have joy in it and have a banquet over it, ay, a foaming tankard of wine that froths out its own mocking laugh. It is the sting of the sandwasp; it has thrust in that venomous sting and hung you up for the next meeting, for the next occasion, just before the bankruptcy comes, and the devouring of your very soul by those whom you have wronged. The devil is cunning; in a sense the devil is not vulgar, blatant, patent, but remote, hidden, concealed, moving stealthily, noiselessly; but he has you, the dart of his sting is in your liver. All evil men are trying to destroy good men. There is a murder subtler than murder; there is a manslaughter within a manslaughter. There may be no red gore or dripping blood on the hands; they are poor murderers that allow the blood to be seen. My son, if sinners entice thee consent thou not; if they say, Come, let us all have one purse, one stock; let us all take counsel together, and outwit both serpent and God,—that is the old trick of the devil; he said to the first parents, If you will eat this fruit you yourselves will be gods; and, Adam, why not? Eve, why not? there is only one forbidden tree between you and Deity—eat it! That temptation goes on to-day; the devil never trusts to an originality, he falls back upon his old cards and old knaveries, and his business is to wreck the world.

What does all history say about this? It says that our serpent-seducers always become our tormentors. The seducing serpent has a most wily tongue; he has a stroke that is gentle, he has an approach that is round about, far-fetched and unsuspected; but the serpent always inflicts pain and always torments those to whom he offers great temptations and prizes. Do this, and you will be a rich man in three months; why should you be toiling and moiling for 3s. 6d. a day when you could make £5 in a week? why should

you be earning your bread by the sweat of your brow when by one toss of the dice you could be a millionaire? And the fool believes the serpent! Nothing will stand but hard work, of the mind or of the body; industry, faithfulness, sobriety, perseverance—along that line no madness lies, but health and honest bread. The fiery flying serpent is the end of the serpent that persuades and wheedles and seduces: he grows by what he feeds on; he becomes a bigger serpent through drinking the champagne or the red wine of your blood. The end of his policy is torment. The fiery flying serpents bit the children of Israel, and they were all thrown down and they all suffered inconceivable agonies. It was the Lord's fiery flying serpent. All the beasts are His; He made the sting of the serpent as well as the heart of the cherub. All agencies are under God's control. There cannot be evil in the city without the Lord having done it—done it in some way we cannot always explain, but in a way which He will ultimately make clear. But there is only one God, one Omnipotence; and He rules, and we cannot hinder. We must be careful how we warm the serpent or the scorpion. They say that a most innocent-looking thing needs only to be put sufficiently near the fire in order to develop a scorpion. We may only have to go six yards further to find our grave. Just round the corner of this little enterprise or speculation, and a door shuts behind us. What then? Hell! You have reached the point of exhilaration in your high and fine drinking, you have got quite a new heart, you feel cheered; another glass, and—hell. And you know it. Some of you have written to me about it and begged me to stand behind you lest you fall down; but you must fall and you must be beaten, you must suffer; there is no way of evading the law.

No human power can cope with the power of the serpent, the power of evil; if help is to come it must come from above. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself: in Me is thy help." It is not in man to find a way out of his own sin; it is not in man to invent an atonement, it does not lie within the wit of man to devise a redemption that shall be thorough and universal and unchangeable. The Cross

must grow in heaven. That wooden gallows on Calvary is a manufacturer's article, made with hammer and carpenter's tools; but the Cross that is within the cross was grown on the slopes of heaven, and the Lamb was crucified, slain, before the foundation of the world. Let us have no modern Calvary; let us have no patent arrangement for cleansing the heart. It is not in the power of man to get at his own heart. No man ever saw his own heart; it is away beyond the pulse—a mystery; it can only be touched by Him who made it, and He only can send the crimson flood that shall cleanse the stain of its guilt. This is the Gospel, this is the everlasting Gospel. The lifting-up of the Son of man is the act of God, but the looking-to that uplifted Son of man is the act of penitence and humble expectation. The Lord finds the symbol to be looked at, but we must look or try to look with our own closing eyes. God give us grace lest we miss the opportunity and the great redeeming symbol be taken down before we have looked as if we would look if we could look. This is a mystery not within the region of words, but a mystery that operates far away down in the very agonies of experience.

Jesus Christ is the great counteractant; He can take the poison out of our veins. I will go to Him, I will say, Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? I shall know that I am in the right direction, and no man who is in the right direction, though he has gone but one step, can ever perish. The salvation is not in some great triumph of the intellect, but in the first trust, the child-like trust, the longing, loving trust. You thought you had to understand all the theological mystery of the atonement before you said you loved the Saviour. No; salvation is not of works, even intellectual; salvation is not of the intellect or of learning, else then college and university would be the cradles of the Church. No; we have to look with the heart, we have to look with the eye of helplessness. We cannot be saved so long as we think we can save ourselves. Out with the idea! It is the idea of the devil. If you think you can move a finger you cannot be saved. You must throw your whole heart on

the love of God, the mercy of Christ, the priesthood of the Son of God, the great mighty, all-completing work of the Holy Ghost. Lord, I would do this ; help me. In my hand no price I bring ; simply to Thy Cross I cling.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY God, we thank Thee that we have heard of the uplifted Son of man. We bless Thee that His uplifting was not in judgment, but in mercy and pity and tenderness. He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. Lord, increase our faith ! May we look upward with the eyes of trust ; may we be more and more assured that we can do nothing but by the grace of God, and into the arms, ever-extended, of the Divine mercy may we fall with gratitude and confidence.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the Triune God, abide with us, until we stand face to face with Him who saved us through His atoning death. Amen.

ORDER OF SERVICE.

SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 1ST, 1900.

Voluntary "Andante" *Batiste*

Anthem 2 "I will extol Thee" *Mason*

The Lord's Prayer.—*Field.*

Hymn 531 .. "All people that on earth do dwell"
(*Verse 3 in unison.*)

1st Lesson. Exodus xxxiv. 6-8.

6. And the Lord passed by before him [*as He does before every man*], and proclaimed [*the first preaching is from heaven*], The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth [*this is quite above the human level*],

7. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin [*all sorts, manners, and degrees of evil*], and [*yet*] that will by no means clear the guilty [*Fudex damnatur cum nocens absolvitur*]; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children [*not in wrath, but in law*], and upon the children's children [*far as the stream goes, even*] unto the third and to the fourth generation. [*I have to accept this either as a revelation or as an invention; I should scorn myself if I adopted the theory of invention.*]

8. And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth [*out of which he came*], and worshipped. [*Worship is the only thing to do under some circumstances.*]

Chant 57 Psalm lxxv. *Robinson*

2nd Lesson. Rom. ii. 1-6.

Anthem "I will magnify Thee" *Calkin*

I will magnify Thee, my God, O King; and I will bless Thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless Thee; and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever. The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts.

PSALM cxlv. 1, 2, 8, 9-3, 4

Prayer.

Hymn 275 (*1st Tune*): "Jesu, Lover of my soul."

Sermon.

Offertory and Solo:

"The Wondrous Cross" *Myles Foster*

MISS LUCIE JOHNSTONE.

Hymn 63 .. "All hail the power of Jesu's name"
(*1st Tune, omit verses 3 and 4.*)

Benediction and Threefold Amen.—*Gounod*

Voluntary "Communion" *Salome*

CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

[*Thursday Morning, July 5th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou art continually saving the world. Ye must be born again, is written upon everything that Thou hast made, that Thou designest to come to perfectness of beauty and usefulness. May we fall into this great law, into all the sweep of its movement and all the tenderness of its wisdom ; thus may we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ ; may we be troubled by the godly discontent that is never satisfied with less than perfectness ; may we all come to the measure of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus ; may there be no halting place, may there be no place of mean intermediate satisfaction where we can rest day by day for ever ; may ours be a strenuous life, a continually outstretching and uplifting life. The Lord grant unto us perfect conquest over all mean desires and all partial satisfactions, and may nothing less than the perfectness of the stature of Christ satisfy our regenerated and sanctified souls. The Lord grant unto us the hearing ear ; we have not yet heard all the music of Thy love, we have not yet heard all the messages of the Cross. We are poor listeners ; some as deaf adders ; others that do not hear the whole tale of Thy gospel deliverances. Awaken our attention from listlessness and distraction, and give us that whole attentiveness that always gains the prize of another revelation. We are found at the Cross. Otherwhere we would not be found ; this is the mystery Thou hast wrought in us by the great salvation by blood. Amen.

XCIH.

“INJURIOUS.”

“*Injurious.*”—I TIM. i. 13.



TEXT of one word ought to be remembered. Read the whole verse that we may see exactly where this bitter herb grows: “Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief”—in another state of mind, in another world; I do not say I did not do it all sincerely, but there is a sincere ignorance, there is an ignorant sincerity. What does “injurious” mean? It means a great many things. It means even violent, uncontrollable, vehement, but it has lower and subtler meanings; and of these, if you are so minded, we will go in quest. We are strong against blasphemy; at blasphemy we shudder. Some nerves easily shudder when the shuddering costs them nothing. Against a persecutor we are very strong, especially when we do not know what a persecutor is. We are not vulgar and blatant enemies of the Cross; we have a fixed orthodoxy. We would condemn a man for using bad words, especially if they were words we did not understand in the sense in which the speaker used them. We are very determined against martyrdom. What is martyrdom? When we hear of the block and the axe and the stake and the thumbscrew, we are neither to be held nor bound, we go into a species of hysterics, nay, we go further sometimes, and go into absolute craziness; we are so dainty, pedantic, absurd. But “injurious”—who thinks of it? Who thinks about giving another man an infection in a public omnibus? We would tear out a blasphemer, we would hand a persecutor over to tormentors, but an injurious man who simply shakes his robe and scatters contagion—is that a case for magistracy? Let us find out what the Gospel has yet to do in our souls; it has to get down into all these finer and subtler shades and meanings. This Gospel

proves its inspiration and divinity, not by grammars and lexicons and long words, but it proves its divinity by searching, penetrating, piercing, going further and further; and when we say, Why is this? it says, Ye must be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Ours is not to be a cheap veneer piety, ours is not to be a mere coating of religious paint; the Gospel says, You must be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing; and Jesus Christ will continue His priesthood until He has presented Himself with a Church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing—a bride for God. We are quite right in handing the blasphemer over to any destiny that will degrade itself by accepting him, we are quite right in shuddering at the notion of persecution, and we are still more deeply right when we ask men to control themselves and get the upper hand of their own souls, and we say, He that controlleth his spirit is mightier than he that taketh a city. All that is perfectly right; do not misunderstand the purpose of this holy message. But we want to go more deeply, we want to get at that furthest inmost spot. God does not deal in broad streaks of goodness, and say, There, that will do. He is no offhand worker, God is no superficial decorator; God is the sanctifier, the regenerator; He works by the Holy Ghost—a personality we have forgotten. We are not in the days even of Christ; after the flesh we know Him no more; we are in the sphere and dispensation of the Spirit that searches all things, yea, the deep things of God, and that takes us away into the ineffable, the eternal, away into the heavens where our mother tongue is not spoken, but where a weird, sweet, tender music is evoked from the heart of the soul.

Now there is something subtler than blasphemy, less vulgar than persecution; there is injuriousness. This is true of all things. There are quiet, simple-looking, innocent-looking things that are the instruments of death. Some of them are in a bottle, in a very small bottle, in a bottle with a label, in an almost ornamental bottle; but there is death in every drain the bottle holds. These poisons do not kill by axe and fire and vulgar block and chain; these destroyers are very quiet, they are dumb destroyers; the sting

has no voice—only death. About these things who cares? What we care about is the blasphemy, the persecutor, the wild man who can only understand the gospel of a strait-jacket; there we could get up a demonstration a million and a half strong, if due time for advertisement were given. But who will get up a demonstration against injuriousness, about these quiet little globules in the spiritual or moral bottle? Why, the globules would be astounded if they heard that there was to be a great demonstration against them—spicules, globules, atoms, nothings. But they are doing more deadly work in the world than soldiers can do. We must get at them, and expose them, we must denounce and avoid them. Do you suppose that you can take certain kinds of drink without being injured? I do not say without being drunk and reeling on the streets; probably not more than three or four people in a Christian congregation could ever be found absolutely drunk; but they may be injured by the drink, the alcohol, the poison that works unseen in the blood and in the brain. We must get at these mean things; leave the blatant infidel, and get into your souls, and let me get thoroughly into mine, and find if we are not cultivating the fiend of injuriousness, and petting into a destroyer some favourite luxury. Of what did this patient die? read me the death certificate; I knew him well. The certificate reads: Morphic poisoning. Did he take the poison? Not consciously. Did he know that he was taking poison? He did not. Did he drink it as a beverage? Certainly not. What gave him these agonising pains in every joint of his body? The stuff that he has been taking for a quarter of a century to quiet pain, to buy off the enemy,—the elixir that was supposed to compose the brain and the nerves. All the time that morphic agency was at work in the blood and on the nerves, and a quarter of a century after he began to use this soothing liquid it killed him. You never saw such pain as he was in; he himself likened it to some agony of a lower Gethsemane. What had done it?—a blow? No. A murder, so called by men? No. What then? A very simple soothing compound of which morphia was the base, and the poor man never knew it till he was told so by those who watched his final struggle. You may

buy sleep too dearly sometimes. You say, I must take my remedy, my brain is weary, my muscles and nerves are exhausted, frayed out; give me my medicine, a narcotic, something to soothe me. You must pay for it, and pay not by gold of the realm, and pay not over the chemist's counter, but pay in the very things you are conserving in nerve and blood and life. Man! you have heard of suicide?—avoid it! The danger is that we denounce the injurious which we are not tempted to practise. I have seen a man condemn drink, and then go and smoke for hours. It was wrong! First cast out the beam that is in thine own eye; then thou shalt see clearly the mote that is in thy brother's eye. The poor vulgar drunkard staggered into his grave; the other man was going by another round, longer, but, except under very special circumstances, he was going, and he will get there. Let us, therefore, when we are thinking of blasphemy and persecution, of martyrdom and all its instruments, and of all the tragical past which we commemorate by great names; let us remember, I say, recounting all these things, that there are other realities of which we should take strict and stern account. We are not broad hired infidels, but there are points at which we do not trust God. That is infidelity of the worst sort—spiritual distrust, withdrawing the custody of our souls under certain critical circumstances from God, and taking charge of it ourselves; having a beautiful creed, written in beautiful German text, framed by an artist's hand, hung up in the chief room, but no faith; mistaking creed for faith, opinion for conviction, and mere sentiment for absolute trust in the love of God. What if the infidels, really defined, be inside, not outside, the Church?

“Injurious.” This is true not only of things, but, secondly, it is true of habits. You understand something of the action of the imperceptible?—understand it more. We read in the prophet that grey hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not. There is an imperceptible decay. Sometimes the old man stretches himself to his full inches, and says, “I am as strong as ever.” He does not see his own occasional stoop. Who ever saw really and truly

his own stoop? Other men see it, and yet, whilst the stooping, kindly old friend says, “I feel in back and in limb and in brain just as strong as I ever was,” his friends simply turn round and look somewhere else. This is a great gift, and is well meant. The young are also subject to this form of injuriousness when they are told, as they always are told by the devil, that there is no harm in it; I can show you the very pick and cream of the land who all do this; there is really no harm; you can have enjoyment, you can spend a very joyous hour, and I will defy the acutest dialectician to prove that there is the slightest harm in this thing: now you try it for yourself and see if my words be not true.

This is illustrated, in the third place, by social influences. There are injurious persons about all the time, and they nearly all go to church, and complain of the singing if it is not loud enough to give them an opportunity of showing that they cannot sing. Who are they? They are all defined in the New Testament. What a book the New Testament is for defining people! Yes, people who go to have their photographs taken really need not do so; all the photographs are in the New Testament and in the Old Testament, and every man who has a Bible has a picture-gallery big enough if he would but think so and look into it. And yet we must be off—Oh, to what place are you going? To the Academy. Ay, to see what? Nothing that is not in the Bible. Of course the paint is not there, and you must always pay for paint, but the soul of it is there. Shall I therefore recite two or three instances of those who do injury socially and almost professionally, whose sphere is the fireside? They are called whisperers. Whispering has become a fine art in the school of the devil. If you were to speak out in loud stentorian tones of course you would spoil your own purpose; as a whisperer you must lower your voice and give the impression that not for the world would you allow any other person to hear it but the person to whom you were then speaking. “Of course,” you say, “I can say this to you, because it will go no further.” Ah me! I was no blasphemer, nor did I kill a single man with the butcher’s axe, but I whispered a character away, I dropped a seed that would

fructify. The apostle called such people, in another passage, "backbiters." They never swear; that would be too large an order to make upon their energy; but they can do a world of mischief by dodging behind the back. You and I never did that; you and I were always great in denouncing blasphemers, persecutors, killers of the body, but we never said an unkind word behind the back of any man, we are real Christians; why, we take the red sacrament, we drink blood. Ah me!

The apostle names another race of injurious persons under the term "inventors of evil things." There is not a word of truth in what they say; they speak inventions, they romance; to put it most mildly, they must certainly imagine or dream the things they relate; they are inventors of things that are evil. They cannot give anybody credit for a good motive. If a man were to give a hundred sovereigns they would say, Well, of course, he is a rich man, and there is plenty left behind,—always taking a mean and a depreciating and disparaging view. And yet that man who said that drank the sacramental blood but a day ago. If we would live up to this faith the world would soon be destroyed, or converted. It is the preaching and living of the Gospel that must be blamed, and not the Gospel itself. If we could live the Gospel the devil would have no standing ground anywhere, and his own hell would be in danger. So it is with injurious persons; when they leave our company we feel that we have in some sense been robbed. What did that man take away? the air is changed; before he came I thought the air pure and sweet, there was a nice tone of health in it, but now that he has been with me an hour and is gone what has he taken away? how account for this sense of robbery and deprivation? Why, now that I recall it, the man never spake a good word about anybody. He nibbled at every reputation; the preacher he described as an excellent man, but—— and when he spake of his brethren in any relation whatever he alone was the perfect man, and if the others were only equal to him nobody knows what would happen. He is not a blasphemer, he has no hatchet, no axe, no thumbscrew; what he touches he blights; he looked at a child, and made a cripple of him. What a sensitive

Gospel, what an exacting Christianity! not a set of documents, but a life, an inspiration, a soul, a spirit all purity and music.

So this word which we have been discussing is a wide-reaching word. It is *hubristes*, translated in Romans i. 30 “despiteful”; translated in Timothy “injurious.” It has an element of uncontrollableness and vehemency in it unquestionably, but there is another aspect of it which we have endeavoured to disclose, and that is the aspect of mischief-doing without any open profession of being mischief-makers. It is a subtle word in that sense; it includes innuendo, it includes superciliousness—that mute but significant elevation of the eyebrows which you cannot report, but which you feel, and which is doing wider mischief than perhaps we suppose. We only elevated an eyebrow, but the children saw it, and it will remain with them an impression to the end; we simply dropped a hint, but the boy that came in just as we were dropping it was an acute boy and impressible, and he began to interpret the hint, and he read our character through that hint. Do not let the injurious person imagine that nobody understands his knavish trick. When he would guard himself we suspect him most; when he delivers a criticism of an unkind sort to us under seal of confidence we should say, No, we cannot have a brother injured under the seal of confidence; produce your criticism to his face; write your name to your letter. If we were to practise this Sermon on the Mount we should have glorious times in the Church, writing off nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand, but the one man left would be worth keeping, a man of quality, a man of real spiritual strength, solidity and moral force. Said John Wesley, as I have quoted to you before, I believe, in his Journal, “Had glorious time at so-and-so; expelled or cut off thirty-eight members.” I would we were all Wesley-like in that way; but we say “added thirty-eight,” Wesley says “cut off thirty-eight.”

Let us beware, finally, of mean sins, of spreading social contagion. What but the Gospel can get at that sort of iniquity? You could make a programme

of six pages for getting clear of drunkenness and swearing and uncleanness and gambling, but you never have yet produced a programme for getting clear of these inner and apparently smaller things. I have never seen a programme for cleansing the soul, except in the New Testament. Therefore I lift up my Saviour's Gospel, and say, This, and only this, will save the world. It cleanses by blood, it finds the sin in its lurking places, and takes away by a catharism mightier than water, soap, or nitre, the stain, the taint, the devil's fingermark. It is not enough for me, therefore, to see great bold reformations; I want to see the regeneration, the work done in the heart. I would not stop any of those reformations; God forbid that I should attempt to do so; they are all right and all proper and have done immense good; but we must not forget that the devil is in the heart. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy hath He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. O to be holy!

I saw in the paper the other day something about Mr. Sheldon being nominated for the presidency or the vice-presidency of the United States, and I also saw that he, without consulting me, had cabled over to America that he declined the nomination. I trust his friends in America will take no notice whatever of such cablegram. I want him to be nominated for president or vice-president, as the case may be, because I want to see a Christian man at the top and front of things. (Applause.) I do not vote for men because they are astute or clever, but because they are morally sound and spiritually in an enthusiastic state of mind. Good men are better than great men. (Applause.) The fact is that good men are the only really great men when all comes to all. I would therefore send another cable, and send it now, at eight o'clock in New York, so that it may get into the evening papers of the United States, and implore my Christian friends to take no notice of Mr. Sheldon's extemporaneous decision. There is one thing, however, about our beloved friend that we ought all to endeavour to imitate, and that is his simplicity, his unselfishness,

and his determination in the strength of God to keep on preaching the Gospel. I, as a man old enough to be his father, pray for him that his days may be long in the land, that his fame may continue to be spotless, and that all his influence may go, as it has ever gone, in the direction of redeeming and uplifting society. (Applause.)

The Rev. Charles M. Sheldon, D.D., author of “In His Steps,” then closed the service with prayer.

SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 8TH, 1900.

Anthem 25 “What shall I render?” *Brown*
The Lord’s Prayer.—*Field.*

Hymn 516 (2nd Tune): “Welcome, sweet day of rest.”

1st Lesson. Job xxvi. 9-14.

9. He holdeth back the face of His throne, and spreadeth His cloud upon it [*so that the greatest glory becomes the greatest mystery*].

10. He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end. [*It is creation, not the Creator, that tires.*]

11. The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at His reproof. [*Take care what you think is the strongest; it will snap.*]

12. He divideth the sea with His power, and by His understanding He smiteth through the proud [*and leaves them without a banner*].

13. By His spirit He hath garnished the heavens; His hand hath formed the crooked serpent.

14. Lo, these are [*the lower*] parts of His ways [*the whisperings of His thunder*]: but how little a portion is heard of Him? [*When the biggest volume has been written it is nothing but index*] but the thunder of His power [*when He is at His mightiest*] who can understand? [*and who can keep his shoes on?*]

Chant 46 Psalm xlii. *Ouseley*

2nd Lesson. Col. i. 9-14.

9. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it [*heard of your faith and your grace and your spiritual triumphing*], do not cease to pray for you [*the time to pray for a man is when he seems to have everything his own way: that is the time of danger*], and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Anthem “I will sing of Thy power” *Sullivan*

Hymn 419: “God is our refuge, tried and proved.”

Offertory and Quartette:

“Morning Prayer” *Mendelssohn*

Hymn 417: “Come, Thou fount of every blessing.”

Benediction and Threefold Amen.—*Gounod.*

[*Sunday Morning, July 8th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou hast surely given unto us a strange song, for we have sung of the day of trouble and of Thy strength and goodness, and behold, we ourselves have tasted both the goodness and the severity of God. We can truly say, How cruel Thou art ; in some of Thy providences we are crushed beneath Thy feet, we bear the whole weight of Thy rebuke, and our poor nature cannot endure more ; we are crushed, and sudden night has closed our day, and the friends that were near at hand are standing far off among the shadows. Yet how good Thou art, how tender, how most wondrously kind ! We know it, we have felt it, we have seen it in the way of life ; we do not receive this testimony from others, we have lived it, and Thou hast been unto us God made visible. Give us, we humbly pray Thee, understanding of ourselves, if we may not have full understanding of God ; it will be something to know what we are, and to know that part of us cannot yet be known, and that within time is hidden the mystery of eternity. Give us, we humbly pray Thee, some solid ground, some living obvious fact, to which we can have recourse as to a sanctuary ; then we shall be glad in the sandy desert, and there shall be fountains found for us in the weird wilderness. We have come to thank Thee with a loud sweet song, for Thou hast done great things for us, and we are glad thereof, and no tempter can keep us from the pious shout of thankfulness. We bless Thee, we kiss Thy giving hand, we trust Thy redeeming heart. Surely Thou wilt not see us utterly cast down and thrown away ; Thou hast a great purpose in our sorrow and affliction, and the morning is hastening upon the night, and the night shall flee away ; all sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Meanwhile, may we not miss the lesson of Thy love ; Thou dost impoverish us that Thou mayest enrich us, and if Thou dost break us on the great wheel, it is that Thou mayest put us together again in a stronger, nobler manhood. We bring all our sick ones and little ones to Thee, and all the prodigals who lie beyond the reach of our poor tearful prayer we ask Thee to heal and comfort and deliver and bring back again that which is lost. This is Thy great work. But Thou doest great works always ; Thou canst do this for us. We bless Thee that we care for Thy sanctuary ; we miss it, we long to return to it ; there is room enough in it for our

soul's whole necessity, whether of pain or sorrow, and whether of enthusiasm and holy passion. Wilt Thou keep us all the time, wilt Thou not leave us one moment to ourselves, and wilt Thou specially come near to us when we say, Is not this great Babylon that I have built? When we are in riotous strength, when our sufficiency is surely in part in ourselves: be near us then, or ambition will overwhelm us, and the tempter will take advantage of our boasted strength, and we who erewhile were on the pinnacle of the temple will presently be cast down and be beyond recovery. Wilt Thou sanctify to us our weakness and our strength; Thou wilt not suffer us to be too much weakened, lest the enemy cry, Ha, ha! and point his rebukes towards us, and turn us, who once seemed to be made for the sunshine, into derision and contempt. We come to Thy side, Thou wounded One, to Thy throne, Thou reigning One, and we know that there is security in the rocks of heaven.

Lord, hear us, and even yet, for Christ's sake and the sake of the Cross in whose great name we pray—even yet it shall be well with us. Amen.

XCIV.

THE WEAKNESS OF STRENGTH.

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."—I COR. X. 12.



TAKE care of your strong points. I want to speak about the weakness of strength. It is customary to say that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. It is quite right to direct our attention along that line, but there is another and completing line. Distrust yourselves when you are most conscious of your strength. Do not make too much an exhibition of your wonderful side; be very careful about your specialties; set a double watch over the pen of your pet graces; they may ruin you, they have ruined many: be self-distrustful, and in God's strength be self-confident. Paul speaks of the enabling Christ; the Christ that gives ability, and more ability, and still more ability as the days come and go until

those who live nearest to Him cry by the end of the week, I can do all things through the Christ that enables me. We say in our English Version, "Christ which strengtheneth me"; I like the other word, enableth me,—feeds my ability, recruits my strength, waters the flower of my spiritual beauty, and sends all needful things to the oak of my power. We say in extemporaneous impiety, There is no fear of your falling or failing there. I am not so sure as you are. My strength may be my ruin, may indeed be my humiliating weakness, and I ought to have been more self-suspicious when I was defiant and riotous in power. All history, so far as we are enabled to collate it, seems to say, Take care of your pet virtues; you will fail in all probability where you think it impossible to fail. That consideration makes life sensitive and tender, and shows the necessity of continual, unceasing, detailed, minute praying. There is a broad general noble prayer that calls for blessings in showers and gracious storms of love; but there is a praying that says, I must not miss one moment,—a closely minuted praying, that prays for everything, that does not ask for general and public or universal blessings, but that does that fine jewel-work in the soul. It cannot be explained; the most solicitous and sympathetic pastor could not explain all that in words, but it can be lived, and experience becomes the final and decisive argument.

I have said, not thoughtlessly, but after much rumination, that men may, according to the teaching of biblical history, fail in the matter of their chief virtue or special excellence. So I would say, Brethren, pray for me that where you think I am my strongest God may watch me most closely. If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness; if your very virtue be a vice, how great is that vice! Nothing can meet this case but a continual seeking after God if haply we may find Him. Have you passed through that great school of experience where the soul does not see, does not hear, but where it feels after,—an image, they say, taken from the action of one who gropes among the strings of the harp, or some other musical instrument, that he may find the right chord, saying again and again in his blindness, No, that is

not the chord. Again he gropes, feels after, and when he strikes the right chord his face is music, his whisper is grander than the roar of the thunder of triumph; he looks his success, and says as he touches the answering chord, This is what I have been groping for; now I will harp upon it, not with my fingers only, but with my heart's love. Thus God is to be invoked, felt after, especially in the time when we think that we are about to build barns and hoard up riches, and send the gleaming scythe amid the golden grain to bring in the harvest that shall save us from famine. That is the place to pray at; not when you are going through the wilderness only, but when you are standing neck-deep among the waving corn and can hardly see the end of the golden sea of grain. A word of intense prayer in that field may save your soul from self-sufficiency and self-confidence.

Let us see if we cannot establish the strange proposition that many men—not all—but many men have failed at the point of their supposed strength and fancied security. You say that Moses was a man meek above all the men that dwelt on the face of the earth. It was just at the point of meekness that he became red-hot angry—the angriest man that the rocks of Sinai ever saw, and the angriest man that the rocks in the wilderness ever felt, for he lashed them as if by some mighty thong he could lacerate their backs and humble them to his will. Which is Moses—the meek man, so meek, so humble, so retiring; or the Moses that lifts up his arms and dashes the tables of stone to the earth, and that smites the rock, and calls in anger, as it were, for water? Whereas nature is not to be so solicited, but quite in another way, gentler, stiller, a way wholly sweeter and more obedient to the soft music of nature. You and I may fail at our meekness. They say—we have not time to tarry in order that we may test the evidence—that the meekest men are the angriest sometimes. Let us look into that point; we may prove it to be untrue, or we may prove it to be true, and if true at all it may be true in our own case, and it may be just at our assured meekness that we should drop on our knee, uplift our pleading hands, and say each for

himself, God save me at this point, where men are praising me for self-control and self-suppression.

How would you describe Abraham? "The father of the faithful." Is that his special grace? Probably so; he is called the father of the faithful, he is honoured for his faith; the word "believed" occurs first in biblical history in connection with the name of Abraham; surely, therefore, there can be no stretch of imagination in saying that faith was Abraham's supreme virtue or grace. Well, it was just at that point that he told lies, and distrusted God, and turned his back upon the starry heavens that were meant to be an omen to him and to his seed for ever. He concocted lies, he turned his wife into his sister that he might escape a possible danger,—he who held the charter of the stars and could read them into the history of his race, he indirectly, if not directly, told lies to a poor pagan hound that rebuked him for being false to his own faith and tradition. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed at his strongest point. He may fall from the topmost pinnacle. He that is low need fear no fall, but what about him who touches the pinnacle-top gleaming in the sun? Lucifer, son of the morning—none fell so low as Lucifer, for none was ever quite so high.

How would you describe Solomon? You would say that Solomon was noted for wisdom. That is so; "As wise as Solomon" has become almost a proverbial expression. He had wisdom and understanding above all men upon the face of the earth. And what did he die of? Folly! Well for him if he had died when he had a renown for wisdom. Do not urge the case too vehemently against him. Well for us, perhaps, if we had died some twenty years ago, when we could by the grace of God really pray and pull down the consenting God to the level of our supplication. Do not be hard on historic personages. O man, take the knife and thrust it into thyself, for that is the judgment which we may judge. So great a philosopher as Solomon; the schools could teach him nothing, and there was not room enough in the schools to accommodate his greatness; and yet the poor old man—oh, the pity of it!—the poor old man made a

fool of himself at the last. Praise no man until he is dead, and do not count thyself impeccable. The temptation has not yet been sufficiently strong, but it can mount. You have seen the flood rising,—now to the chin, now to the opening lips, now to the hard-breathing nostrils, and at last submerged. O pray for me when I seem to be strongest, and pray for one another when you have your singing robes around you and think you can join the concert that is above. We do pray for one another when we are broken-hearted, and we gather around our downtrodden ones, and say, God of pity, do not press any harder, or our poor life will give way, some blood-vessel of the soul will yield, and then who can heal? At that cruel point we do pray for one another, as if it were out of sheer pity; but we ought to pray for a man with his purple on, and with his reeking dinner in front of him, and the music beating and throbbing in the air, to turn aside and say, God pity him now! this may be a guise of the devil; take away his hunger rather than that he should eat of the poison; make him incapable of thirst rather than he should drink from the river of the devil.

We have heard of the patience of Job, brethren, and yet when patience does give way what can be so petulant? When the motion is in the other direction, self-accelerating every moment, who can stop the rushing wheels? Job was patient, his patience is historical; but he was the most impatient man in the world. If you want to know what impatience is read the book of Job; never was there a man so gifted in the eloquence of impetuosity and impatience and angry and resentful impatience. His comforters did not probably mean it, but they fed the very impatience they were trying at least nominally to subdue and almost to sanctify. When a man breaks away at his very strongest point, what imagination can picture the probable catastrophe? Here is a man who has been known for his abstinence for a lifetime; if ever his lust and self-control should catch fire none will burn as he will burn. He has so much blood; there is so much in him to be consumed and to consume. There is so little of some of us the fire need not be wantonly wasted upon us, but other men seem to have gathered

in strength that they may the more vividly be shown as examples of humiliation and utterest loss. If the light that is in thee be darkness; if the virtue be vice; if the ambition grovel; if the hunger hunger for unrighteousness; what then? what need for vigilance, what need for daily upshutting with God in the most secret place, lest we be put to shame through our very virtue.

Who says, "Though all men forsake Thee, yet will not I"? These words are quoted from the hot lips of Peter. "Yet will not I." Cut out these words, and what a text they make! The man separates himself from all other men, and without words says, Look at me, if you please; here you find a pillar of the heavens, here is a man that will not play false to any cause or banner which he espouses; see me—yet will not I; we shall see them falling off in dozens, scores, troops, thousands, but there will I stand, faithful among the faithless found. He was the greatest coward in the little crowd; he denied his Lord, he said, "I do not know Him"; he cursed and swore, he said again, "I know not the man." Why, he failed at the very point of his strength. Precisely so; that is the object of this meditation, to show that we may fail not at our weakest point, but at our strongest. So I have to take my very virtues to God every morning, and say, Lord, pity me, pity me! these virtues are going to get the better of me, I am going to consider them from a wrong point and value them by a false standard: Lord, can Thy pity stoop so far as to stand beside me when my virtue tells me that I am a pattern man?

Who wrote that elaborate work upon some particular disease? You remember his name? Perfectly! What did he die of? He died of the very disease which he discussed and illustrated and showed to be curable. What did that great doctor die of? He died of cancer. Had he made cancer a study? Yes, he had published a book upon cancer; he showed exactly what cancer was; he diagnosed the case with perfect skill—and died of the disease. Ah, it was like omniscience dying of ignorance. Suspect yourselves of heterodoxy when you have proved your orthodoxy by expelling some

other men. That is a great argument. To expel another man for heterodoxy reflects honour upon myself; I will hear the people whispering as I go out amongst them, How orthodox he is, how true to the old faith! I was true to the old faith until I expelled that man; up to that point I really think I may magnify the grace of God in me that I have kept tolerably closely to the old faith; but I have cut off a brother, I have turned him out, and I have not gone after him to ask him to return. I do not say there are not times when men ought to be expelled, but let them be expelled on moral grounds rather than intellectual, rather than on matters on which there may be honest differences of opinion; be very careful there. It is so easy to stone an adulterer, and then go and commit adultery; it is thus that lust pays its pewrent and gratifies its desires. Take care of yourselves! is a voice that comes to us from all history, when you suppose you are strongest; let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall; if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing as it ought to be known. O for the larger love, the diviner pity, that takes in all souls. Better be deceived than rot away in some malignant and ungenerous suspicion of others. I have to keep under, in the grace and love of Christ, my own soul, and not to set up myself as a judge concerning other souls more than I can possibly help. Other vineyards have I kept, my own vineyard have I not kept; I have found fault with many a mote, and kept the beam in my own eye. So may many a man say, and the more he says it, if speaking in accordance with truth, the more he will be driven to the throne of the heavenly grace. The greatest man amongst us will be the gentlest judge. He who best knows himself knows human nature best. We need not go into the schools for a complete analysis of human nature; we have only to turn in upon ourselves and let self-introspection read to us the mystery of our own being and quality. Find a man who is very great on any point, even intellectually, and you find a man who is in danger of dethroning and utterly unsettling himself. The proportion of probabilities is that a man will fail where he thought failure was impossible. These instances have illustrated this pro-

position sufficiently to enable us to repeat it, and to repeat it with poignant self-application. Only One was clear of all sin, and when others would have stoned the sinner He looked at her, made her young again, and gave her back to her mother that she might start the world afresh.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, drive home these lessons into our hearts. May we cease to trust in ourselves, and trust more lovingly and completely in Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, and is now our Paraclete on high. May He send to us the other Paraclete to abide with us for ever, to give us instruction in things divine, to reveal to us the temper and purpose of the Cross, and to bring us into consenting obedience to Thy holy decrees and design. Forbid that any should fall; save us, we pray Thee, at the Cross every one.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the Triune God, abide with us, that we may escape the wilderness and find the paradise of God. Amen.

[Thursday Morning, July 12th, 1900.]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we would that our whole life were devoted to Thy service in the spirit of Christ Jesus our Lord, who heeded not Himself that He might save and redeem with an infinite redemption the whole world. May this mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus; then our smallest action shall be great, and all that we say or do shall be wise with the wisdom of God. This is the miracle of Divine grace, this is the miracle of the Cross. We pray that we may have the Holy Ghost, so that we may penetrate the meaning of the Divine letter, and read the Divine revelation with wisdom and entire comprehension of its meaning. We thank Thee if we know anything of Thy Word in its moral precepts, in all the lessons of this life, in all that pertains to our daily walk and conversation; how infinitely more do we thank Thee for the degree in which we understand the purpose of Thy book in redeeming the world by the precious blood of the Son of God. This is the grace of Jesus Christ, this is the supreme miracle of the Cross. The Lord Himself dwell in us and rule us with all His gentle might, and ever find us at the Cross, that we may eventually find Him in His own heaven. Amen.

XCIV.

QUALITY OF SERVICE.

"No little kindness."—ACTS xxviii. 2.

"O little kindness." The Revised Version gives us another word, perhaps a richer: "No common kindness"—but a kindness to be remembered, specialising itself in our memory; we can never forget the attentiveness and civility of these barbarous people; truly, to the end of the chapter we shall think of all their courtesy as no common kindness. This was not an everyday affair, but wholly special, finely and highly marked by Christian courtesy, as we should say; the marvel of it being that the people who showed it were not Christians. We must take care lest these barbarians get ahead of us. They tell me now that some people say there are better people outside the Church than there are in it. We have a hard fight to conduct, and a hard race

to run. If you are kind to those who are kind to you, what of it? are not even the pagans the same? If you pray for those who pray for you, what of it? what does it amount to in spiritual and Christian quality? do not even the Gentiles the same thing? Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye cannot see the kingdom of God. It is matter of common report that there are good people who do not go to your church, or to mine, or to any other church. They are full of kind deeds, sweet thoughts, charities that do not wither in the east winds. There ought to be some difference between a man who is crucified with Christ Jesus and a man who never heard of Him. The power of Christian character over every other power is in its distinctiveness. Not where Christianity is part and parcel of a common civilisation, but where it stands out in an individuality of its own, do we find its power and its grace.

Who speaks of these barbarous people? The greatest man who ever spoke of any nation or kindred or tongue. The Apostle Paul speaks of the uncommon kindness of the barbarous people of an obscure island. My Lord said they shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and ye yourselves shall be shut out. Let us take care how we roll our fur and silken and crimson robes about us, and think we are so much better than other people. What if at the last it should be found that the last shall be first and the first shall be last? You who have drunk the blood-red wine of sacrament should be better than your neighbour, who knows not, in any really useful sense, the name of God. What must he, your own neighbour, expect from you when it is explained to him that you have entered into the great mystery of Divine communion, and that you have taken an oath at the Cross of your Redeemer to serve no other crown but the crown of Immanuel? If he find you on the common street doing the common things, acting selfishly, sharp in your commercial practice, and just like other people so far as he can see, what is the puzzled and bewildered man to make of your confession of faith? He will treat it as an idol,

a kind of unspeakable deity whose presence has no effect upon you, a spiritual concern which does not surround you with fire, with sanctity, or indicate an unction which it were profanity to dispute. It is a terrible thing to be really religious ; it is an almost impossible thing to get ahead of some men who make no profession of religion and yet are kinder to their own families than we are. They may never have seen a creed, but they have kissed a prodigal son and welcomed him back to the bosom of the family love. The word orthodoxy—hateful word!—they may never have heard, but they may have dealt their bread to the hungry, and drawn liberally of their stores to help those who were helpless.

Here is an apostle who has found an island where there is no need of missions. The people were greatly taken with their own opportunity of doing good ; they showed us no common kindness. What do you think they did ? “ They kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.” Surely they were not far from the kingdom of Him who said, Whoso shall give a cup of cold water to you in the name of a disciple shall in no wise lose his reward. Here is a people that have devised new plans and seized new opportunity. They have lighted a fire. Jesus spake about giving a cup of cold water to religious people ; they seem to have made in some sort an advance on the idea of Jesus Himself. For they have kindled a fire, and they drew every one towards the warm cinders, and they would not have any one left out in the rain ; and they went into their own places and brought out what they could of covering and wrap-page, because of the intense, the icy cold. Why do you send the word of the kingdom to such people ? Will you send to such people a man who thinks of himself, cares for himself, and can do nothing unless he is surrounded by comfort and environed in almost luxury ? Take care ! These men were pagans, barbarians, and Paul and his fellow-voyagers said, Now we had better, I think, look a little carefully into these offers of kindness and suspect in such offers something that may be of the nature of poison and something of the nature of suspicion, and they may be

entrapping us and ensnaring us: be very careful how you treat barbarous people. That would not have been the Apostle Paul; he was great, and thought everybody else great because of the Spirit of Christ that was in him. Now you perhaps may be a man of very marked prejudices which you nickname earnest convictions; you would naturally say, coming out of the sea dripping wet, really drenched with salt water, Now nobody must offer me any help who is not of my own political party. You would not like to be saved from drowning by a man who belonged to the other side, ecclesiastical or political. Bless God for any Christ in life that destroys all partial lives and that brings men heart to heart in a common love, and that reveals the organic unity of the human race. We do not always understand the meaning of the great distresses of life; they may be intended to unite us, to show us the better side of human nature, and to develop all that is best in ourselves in relation to strangers whose very names we had never heard. Who invented that word "stranger"? Jesus Christ did all in His power within a given limit of time and ministry to obliterate the word stranger. He set His Spirit to work so effectually in the apostolic mind that the apostles blotted out the word stranger. There are no strangers now in Christ Jesus, neither bond nor free, barbarian, Scythian, man, woman: all are one in Christ Jesus. This is the high Christian argument. Not some little niggling of a grammatical kind, but a grand reconciliation and unification of the human race; and having given unto us spiritual vision so large and keen that we can see written over the whole blue firmament, "God is no respecter of persons."

Think of the apostle taking notice of little kindnesses—which he turned into great kindnesses. That is one result of real Christian culture; I may go further and say that is a grand result of spiritual culture. You remember how the prophet estimated the little chamber that was made for him in the good woman's house which he passed from time to time in his journeying; there was in it a bed and a table and a candlestick and one or two other little things; and when the prophet looked upon that small inventory it became a great catalogue, and he said, What shall we do for

thee, seeing thou hast been careful for us with all this care?—a phrase big enough for the British Museum or for some kingly chamber and house or castle or palace. It is the delight of love to magnify. There are certain little pale-faced people who never exaggerate anything; they always speak with such extreme moderation as to tell lies about whatever they are talking about. You cannot exaggerate the Gospel; you cannot exaggerate love; nor can you exaggerate real human help. You value lightly the tribute that is paid to you with such nicety of term, written by some man quite well read in a technological dictionary, and who searches every word backward into the Aryan root. What love-letters he must write! But as for great burning, noble love, only a man like the apostle (see 1 Cor. xiii.) can adequately write about the great affections. It will be the same with Christ at the seat of judgment; when He looks at our service He will astound us by His commendation of it. He will say, I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; sick and in prison, and ye came unto Me. And the people answered with astonished countenances, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison? when did all this happen? we have no recollection of it. Then shall the King answer—and kings must make kings' speeches—Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me. It is the nature of love to give great tributes and great rewards, pressed down, heaped up, running over—like the sunshine that wastes light enough to glorify many worlds big as ours.

We have, then, to do not with service, but with quality of service. There is service, *and* service; there is a way of doing a thing so as to undo it; there is a reluctance that destroys all worthfulness and grace in deeds done to other people; there is, on the other hand, a way of doing a little thing which makes it great, a gracious, sweet, kindly way which multiplies the thing that is done, not only by increasing its quantity, but mainly and spiritually by refining its quality. Not what was said so much as how it was said, is an expression we often hear in some form or other. Not what he gave, but the way in which he

gave,—Can we ever forget the kingliness of his mien, the grace of his countenance, the music of his voice? It was not given as if a patronage were being conferred, but given as if we had almost earned the result which he communicated to us. That was Christ's way. Sometimes people came to Him, and when He did according to their desire, when He was greatly pleased with their manner and spirit, their disposition and their unspoken love, He said, "Go, thy faith hath made thee whole,"—as if the people had wrought their own miracle by their own faith. So gracious was He who tasted death for every man! Let us in our degree be holy and gracious and generous as God our Father is in His government and providence of time. What we want is to get at the real spiritual quality of service, and that we must reach at all costs and everywhere. You say this man preached, and you say that man preached; you have made no impression upon my mind by these general remarks; I say, How did he preach? Did he preach as if he could have preached again?—then it was poor preaching. Did he preach as if it took no fire out of him?—then it was not preaching the kingdom of God. Did he preach as if he were shedding blood for his people's sake?—then he was a preacher; though a poor grammarian and a halting rhetorician, yet he so preached as if in the act of preaching he was in the act of dying that other men might live. What we want is not service, but quality of service; in other words, the quality of the Cross. In every sermon Jesus Christ preached He shed blood: in every sermon we preach we must be poorer men if we have done what we attempted to do,—poorer in nervous energy, poorer in physical capacity; virtue should have gone out of us. Will that great preaching ever return?

It is reasonable to expect no common service from Christians because they are men and women of no common character. The Church is not a gallery of wax-works; the congregation is not a crowd of artistically made and framed bodies; the Church is a gathering of self-sacrificing souls. The character of the Christian is not a question of artifice or of fine manufacture or of school culture; the character of the Christian is a work of God, is a miracle of the Holy

Ghost, is a jewel not made with hands. From such a character what do we expect? We expect no common kindness, no little, usual, offhand service; we expect service that means something, that conveys something, service that is red with an inner crimson, with the blood of Christ. We render no common service because we have no common Saviour. The saved man must in his own possible degree be of the same quality as the Saviour that redeemed him. We represent Christ. Sometimes by our misrepresentation we raise the question, Is this your Christianity? ha, ha! what do ye more than others? You say you represent Christ? Let it be so, then we have a right to examine and cross-examine you in order to know what stuff you are made of, because we want to find this Christ and to judge Him for ourselves: stand forth, witness of His, that we may vivisection and dissect you and discover your real quality.

Who, then, can be saved? Lord, are there few that be saved? and are those few self-suspecting, self-distrusting, self-sacrificing, souls that would have nothing to live for if there were no good to be done? Remember that we represent the Saviour, and it is said of Him, When He was reviled He reviled not again. Do not ask me to represent Him! When He suffered He threatened not. Obliterate my poor name from the list of His followers. He gave His back to the smiters and His cheek to them that plucked off the hair. Do not count me among those who can gather under His blood-red banner; include me among the godless and the devil-following, for I took revenge upon a man who did me an injury, I held him up to contempt, I sneered at him, I tried to spoil his credit in the City, I inflicted upon him every possible sign and token of discredit and dishonour. If only they are Christians who when they are reviled revile not again, O drop me from the list of Communion-attendants and drive me out that I may join my proper soul-kindred, the outcast and the lost and the half-damned. People seem to think that it is quite an easy thing to be a Christian; they think that if they go to certain places of worship and observe certain ordinances and undergo certain processes, that all is right, and they have nothing further

to fear. We have not so learned Christ; it leaves us dead men that it may make us alive again with the true pulsation and the incorruptible blood.

In fact, there is nothing common about the whole range of thought and service connected with the name of Christ. Whatever we touch is sacred; every place is praying-ground, every flower is part of a larger gospel, every wind that blows brings us news from far-away places, and if we were true scholars we would be able to interpret the wind gospel. God is wind: God is a Spirit. The Christians have a book, and that book is no common book. It is not literature; it is revelation. It is only literature in the initial and elementary and framework sense; it has a letter and it has a grammar, and it has a fine defence along that whole line mechanical; but in itself, its soul, its meaning, it is no book. It is a still small voice, it is a vision in the night-time, it is a light above the brightness of the sun, it is a communication from the Eternal Heart. It is not to be catalogued with other books, it must stand alone,—unique, not with oddness, but with unconquerableness. This is how the Bible must be read if it is to be read with profit. It is to be read as a spiritual communication from God the Spirit to man a spirit. As surely as God is a Spirit so surely is man a spirit. As we have often taken occasion to say, man has a body, but is a soul.

And as for the motive which rules us, the high prompting and inspiration, it is no common motive. The motive of the Christian is not a calculation, it is not a sum in religious or semi-pious arithmetic: as who should say, If we do this, then such and such awards will follow; if we make such and such declarations, then we shall be counted of the number of the orthodox; if we go to such and such places, we shall disguise the real motive which animates us, and we shall get credit for being people of high respectability, and we shall become citizens of credit in the neighbourhood. That is not Christian talk; that soliloquy is not a soliloquy, it is a dialogue, and the devil is the other speaker, the interlocutor, the one that speaks between and fills up the hiatus, if not with words, with awful fire. We should have for our motive the love of Christ. The Apostle Paul said, speaking of

himself and his brother apostles, The love of Christ constrains. On another occasion he said, We must speak; we believe, and therefore speak; we love man, and therefore must, after the pattern and under the blessing of Christ's Spirit, save him. Who, then, can be saved? Let the heart go back to the sanctuary of its own solitude, and bitterly and deeply consider that poignant and pungent question.

Now, said the apostle, in writing to one of his church correspondents, so to say, be not weary in welldoing; if anybody is shipwrecked on your shore, light a fire, bring out all the clothes you have, and search your cupboard to find what bread you can give. If you have much, you will hardly have the joy of giving; but if you have only one loaf, then you yourself can be a gift. A man who has five hundred loaves cannot give much; if he gave one hundred away, he would have four hundred left; but you, having only one loaf, you can keep the crust and give away the inner part of the bread, and you shall have honour in heaven. Yes, said he, weary not in welldoing. What is the exact meaning of "welldoing" in that expression? Just what the barbarous people showed to the apostle and his friends. The word welldoing does not mean going to a Sunday-school, and doing all sorts of nice things for other people at the expense of your father and mother whom you have left at home to get the dinner ready. Ah, out upon you! Welldoing has a much deeper meaning: it means true civility, true courtesy, the gentlemanliness, the courtliness of the soul. Be not weary in courtesy. So many Christians are apt to be a little occasional in their culture and in their courtesy, so that you have to say before you go much further, I wonder what mood he is in to-day? There is so much occasional piety; the piety of some people goes so much up and down with the weather-glass. I wonder how she will take this or that to-day. You can easily find out: where is the wind? So much moody piety, so that there are some people that when you speak to them you do not know whether you will be received with welcomes or repelled by insults. The Apostle Paul says, Be continuous in your courtesy, in your

philanthropy, in your love of man, in your high Christian gentlemanliness. And when he wrote to the Romans he gave the lady who carried the letter this character: "She hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also; therefore receive her"—how?—"as becometh saints." There is a saintly behaviour, there is a spiritual etiquette, there is a refinement that is of the nature of the grace of Christ. We have to be clothed with these beautiful garments, and on those garments there are glittering jewels not found in the mines of earth, only in the innermost places of heaven.

How can all this be done? Only in one way. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." He is orthodox, so that it requires a building fifty feet high really to accommodate the capital O with which he spells Orthodoxy, and after all he may be but a painted wolf.

I am too much overborne and depressed by the cold clammy air of death, so many people seem to have died or to be dying within the last little space of time. We have just lost the Rev. Bloomfield James, a very frequent Thursday morning hearer, a man of great excellence and of great beauty of character, and with special ministerial gifts, and he went up, taking, as I think, my place; I seem to have several stronger rights than he had to go away from this world of masks and shams. But he went first; it was God's will. The Lord be with the widow and the family with great comfort, and breathe into their souls the music of the Divine consolation. I have a letter just now saying that the Rev. William Dorling, of Buckhurst Hill, is very near his end. I pray for him that there may be light at eventide. No stronger man in the matter of conviction and honourable friendship ever came within my notice than the Rev. William Dorling—a man of high gifts, of spotless honour, and of strenuous determination in his holy work. The Lord speak to him when his ear is deaf to human voices.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the Triune God, abide with us, until we meet on the other side those from whom we have received no common kindness.

[*Sunday Morning, July 15th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we have heard that as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so Thou art round about Thy people. Make us, we humbly pray Thee in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord, quite sure of this ; then shall the week be one long Sabbath and the Sabbath one happy industry. We need continual assurance of Thy presence, Thy care, and Thy love ; the enemy is so near, the temptations are so strong, and the line that separates between us is often so difficult to discern. The Lord help us, the Lord be our strong tower in the day of storm and of danger ; the Lord open His heart unto us that we may find sanctuary in His love. We bless Thee for Thy holy Word, Thy holy day, and Thy holy house ; may we, realising this holy environment, be holy ourselves. The Lord grant unto us, therefore, even as we pray and whilst we continue in supplication, a plentiful bapt'ism of the Holy Spirit. We are full of thankfulness, though sometimes full of sadness. What hast Thou left undone for us ? Thou hast built a house round about our lives, Thou hast spread our table, Thou hast made our bed in our affliction, Thou hast used young voices to drive away the depression of the house and of the life, and Thou hast set our house in a fair garden where all the flowers are gospels. How shall we thank Thee enough for Thy tender care in the house and Thy public care in the great market-place, and Thy guidance all the time amid the perplexity and the tumult and the difficulty of life ? We have brought our psalm of thankfulness and have sung it, and would have sung it more loudly and more sweetly if we could, for Thou hast done great things for us, and our song shall be a song of greatness. We bless Thee for all sunshine, for all music, for all young-heartedness, and for every ray and gleam of hope. Thou knowest the enemy would depress and overbear us ; wilt Thou lift up a standard against him and give us a moment's peace ? We would associate peace with God's house, we would think of it as a place of rest, a tabernacle of safety, a pavilion through whose roof no storm can break. We need help : some are broken-hearted ; some are ill at ease through little causes that might easily be removed ; some are hungry, and others sit in a place of health and plenteousness ; some are very poor, and some have all that heart could wish. Hast Thou not a blessing for each of us ? does any one escape the notice of Thy love ? Answer us, we humbly cry unto Thee, whilst we tarry at the Cross in the name of Jesus

Christ Thy Son. We remember our grief; when we remember Thine we forget our own. We are so small and sinful that we magnify our cross until we lean it against the Cross of Christ, and then see how small it is. Wilt Thou come to us like the impartial sunshine; wilt Thou come to every one of us as if he were the only worshipper in Thine house to-day; then come upon us all like a rushing mighty wind from heaven, and give us joy of Pentecost. We would remember our sin, only Thou hast taught us to forget it; for where sin abounds grace doth much more abound. So we will forget the misery in the unspeakable joy. Amen.

XCVI.

PERSONALITY AND POWER

"He arose . . . and there was a great calm."—MARK iv. 39.



IN the thirty-seventh verse we read, "And there arose a great storm of wind"; in the thirty-ninth verse we read, "And He arose . . . and there was a great calm." This is the poetry of life. There is a storm side, and there is a side of great calm. Is there anything that helps us to realise the magic and the majesty of a great personality? What is personality? what is a person? No man can tell, yet every man thinks that he himself is a person: which only means that no man can really tell the meaning of himself. Is there not some helpful analogue in nature? You have been out early in the garden before the sun has risen, and the flowers are folded and are almost ghostly, and you in some degree feel afraid to speak lest you should awaken spectral voices and rebukes. Can you not overget them? Try; light a match; now under that lighted match does the garden look any better? Nay, the spectres seem to shiver the more. Let a few minutes pass by, say fifteen or twenty at the most, and the sun comes in the fulness of his morning strength; and when he arose there was a garden, and a garden at its best, every weed a jewel, every flower a crown. What did it? Your match or God's sun? Is there anything in

social life that will help us to understand the magic and the majesty of true personality? There may be something in the action of love, the great affection, the all-including charity; the great queen of influence in whose happy, mysterious power you seem to have a minor love for everybody. How is that? Therein you find something of the mystery of nature and the mystery of personality. All these people are nothing to you in the absence of the one person, but in the presence of the one person all these cyphers become living units, and you feel kindly to the whole human race through the one passion that makes that man, that woman, the idol of your heart. We cannot help this; we have no control over these coming-and-going moods of ours; ours is a poor, pale, neutral life, until some special personality warms it into colour and thrills it into music.

Now when Jesus Christ arose there was a great calm. Not only because He rebuked the winds and the waves, but because, primarily and wholly because, He Himself was calm. Peace brings peace; repose is mastery. See an audience inflamed and excited upon some great theme; the only calm man in the place is the speaker, if he be by the inspiration and appointment of God a master of assemblies. See a great number of persons on a ship, wind-besieged, storm-tossed; is there no calm man upon this vessel? There is one. What is his name? The captain. Woe betide the ship if the captain give way! Because he is at peace he calms those whom he has in charge. See a tremor on the captain's face, and the whole number of the passengers may be penetrated by panic. These little analogies help us to understand the wondrous personality of Jesus. He arose—but the wind had risen: the wind will retire when its Master arises. Do not consider or concern yourselves about the wind, the storm, the screaming, hurrying tempest. Hope thou in God; thou shalt take thy Saviour's peace as part of thine own tranquillity:—My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you; peace, be still; peace, be not afraid. We have a derived peace; tranquillity of our own we have none, but we have the whole river of the grace and peace of God flung

through our hearts, and we are at peace because we build our tents for a night by the river of peace.

The one idea which I wish to take home with me is this: Whenever, wherever Christ rises, there is a great calm. The scene of the text is local and has long passed, centuries lie between us and that then exciting incident; but the doctrine remains. What is the doctrine? That whenever, wherever, Christ rises peace follows. So without the appendages of the miracle we can retain and repeat in our own happy experience all that the miracle was intended to convey. Let us see if this be not so; let us interrogate Experience upon this point. This is not a question for the critic, but this is a question for experience, for life; and our testimony should be explicit and direct. Is it true that whenever and wherever Christ rises the wind goes down, the storm vanishes, and the angel of peace comes and spreads wings of light over the whole creation?

Let us take it in the matter of those little angers, vexations, and bitternesses, that trouble our uncertain and peevish life. You are in anger; it cannot be great anger, because you are not great yourself; but to you it is a great anger, because you judge it by your own standard; really it is a spark, a flash, a bubble, that rises and sparkles and perishes. Yet take that anger at its worst: how you fume about the house, how you speak shortly and snap-pishly to people who live not only with you but for you! How are you going to be tamed in that little splashing anger of yours? When the great Christ-like considerations come up, rise in the soul, instantly the anger falls away and a sweet calm supervenes. You were not to be reasoned with in the moment of your anger; you felt that you were superior to all argument; in fact, you felt that there was no argument except your own; you looked down with a kind of contempt upon those who thought they could argue you out of your mean condition of mind. They could do nothing with you; but when Christ arose, when you remembered what He was, what He did, what He is, what He expects, you were ashamed; and for anger there came great Christly love. It is just as true, therefore, of us as it was of the sea.

For a time the storm seemed to have it all its own way, there was no successfully opposing it; but when Christ arose the wind knew Him and retired abashed, ashamed of its mean little roar over the face of the sea. We can only get ourselves out of great difficulties by bringing great considerations to bear upon the case. What right have you to be angry? at all events, what right have you to be angry so long? and has the God of mercy nothing to bear from you? You set up your little woes and griefs and charge God with harshness because He has meted out these to you, forgetting that He plunged the sword first into His own heart. That we always forget, and therefore we fall into atheistic bickering and crying, saying, What have I done that I should have suffered all this loss? do I require all this discipline? my burden is greater than I can bear; what have I done more than others? O thou priest of atheism, turn thine eyes upward and see that on the throne there is a wounded One. We as Christians do not speak of God as outside our woes and griefs; we say that He suffered most, and then we take our little cross and lean it against the great tree of His sorrow, and we are ashamed that God has given us so little to carry. This consideration should drive all vexation, anger, petulance, and atheistic impatience out of our nature; the reflection being simply this, that God is the sufferer. We have not an high priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; for He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Our wounds are one; His, five. Remember this, and be calm.

Take it in the matter of anxiety. Some people are dying of care, thought; they wonder what will happen to-morrow, in anticipation they meet all the difficulties of the next seven years. They set themselves little problems in moral arithmetic, asking, If this should be equal to that, and a third thing should affect both the things now in opposition, what will possibly happen this day five years? The Lord does not ask you to be arithmeticians in that sense; in fact, very little arithmetic will satisfy the Lord. We do not want all this anticipation and multiplication of difficulties and dangers, losses and crosses. We may

never live to see to-morrow; some men die in the night-time; in some nights the bridge is lost that connects the days. What then? Watch; be vigilant, be sober; expect the Lord: the great watchword of the Lord's Church should be, The kingdom of heaven is at hand! The worlds touch one another, not by material tact, but by magnetic, sympathetic, inexpressible relation and ministry. All the wrinkles upon your face were made by thinking about to-morrow. If anything could rub out those deep wrinkles it would be yesterday. Have you tried that wondrous instrument? Is it a sponge with which you can wash? Is it some kind of instrument by which you can rub out the wrinkles and the ripped furrows in which you have sown the seeds of bitterness, for your own feasting, so to say, which is true fasting by-and-by? What have you to be so anxious about? I will find you paper and pencil if you will sit down and write on the one hand all your miseries. Do not spare them, put every one down, write the list with an emphatic hand; and then do not rise until you have written on the other side all your mercies. What business have you to be alive at all? Your life is forfeited, you live on pity; because the Lord's compassions fail not you are here; why, that one line outbalances and obliterates the whole miserable registration of your little woes and frets and fumings that you have just written down to your own satisfaction. There should be more happy people; if people would only think of the great Christ idea, the great Christ rising in the life universal, they would soon come to expunge all their little entries of pain and vexation and trouble and annoyance and nuisance. Come, my dear sir, we have had enough of this! On the whole, who are you? Now do talk of the Lord's mercy and pity. He died for you, and rose again for you, and He is on the throne pleading for you, and whatever your business is, if you be faithful to Him He will see you through. Now blot out that side on which you have written all your complaints, and make the tablet of your registration one broad leaf on which you write of the love of God and the certainty of heaven.

Take it in the matter of social strife. We seem to live by strife; there is always somebody ready to

make some other body uncomfortable ; some people take wages for stirring other people up, and would take twice as much if they could get it ; and there are persons who think they know how to settle all social combat, misunderstanding, and miscarriage of social courtesy or social justice. How would they do it ? They rise in the ship, and the ship rocks more than ever ; they rise in some great sweltering crowd, and offer a programme several inches long by which they propose to settle all these things ; and the storm does not abate, the great wind roars as if troubled by a deeper discontent. The world is not to be saved by programmes and schedules and new social schemes. No ; first light the landscape with candles, and then you may see your way clear to drive off social darkness by social schemes. How is all this misunderstanding to be cleared up ? How is all this tumult to be settled ? How is some gleam of heaven to be brought to bear upon this chaos ? I will tell you ; I am here for that purpose, and for no other purpose, and if I fail here I fail wholly. Let Christ arise ; Christ will settle all your social disputes, all your trade strikes, all your collisions, oppositions, and competitions. Let the Spirit of Christ work ; let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus : and when the Christ Spirit rises in our hearts we will meet one another in mutual apology, in large concession, in noble charity, in generous justice. This thing is only to be done by the Spirit of Christ. It may be patched up for a little time ; you may put a programme under one infirm part of the building, and for a moment the building will seem to be stayed by a postage stamp, but there is nothing really to be done until Christ takes it in hand. Only Christ can rule His own world. He was in it before it was there to be in ; He was slain from before the foundation of the earth ; before any place was called Calvary Christ died for the world. Until we get these grand conceptions of unity, massiveness, continuity, and sanctity, thoroughly into our minds, we can do nothing ; we can patch a little here and patch a little there, and can go to some place where is written in a poor handwriting, Repairs and jobbing done here. We do not want that man ; we do not want repair, we want reconstruction ; we do not want jobbing,

we want regeneration; we do not want a new cement, we want a new heart. When Christ arises in this way people will say, What has happened? what is this balmy influence in the air? what is this sweet sense of something very precious? It is not seen, yet it is felt, it pervades like a fragrance, it does not strike like a hammer: what is this? It is the Lord that rises with healing in His wings. The storm is not still until Christ calms it, and when He calms it no power can ruffle it again, it is still and tranquil under the sovereignty of Christ.

We might try it also in the matter of war. Everybody in England knows how every war should be conducted, provided they themselves are not in it. There is not a creature on the face of the earth that does not know how governments ought to behave themselves. Let us bless God that they who talk thus are not themselves in any government. How will you bring these wars to an end? Only in one way. You do not conquer a people by shooting them down; you are not great soldiers because you are great murderers. You can only get a nation to be right by the power of Christ, by the influence of the Gospel. It may require a long time to work out the whole purpose and scheme of the Gospel, but if the time is long the work is sure; once completed, it will abide for ever. Such great and pitiable mistakes are made when they say "Great victory"! By what power? Our men ten to one on the field, and the ten have killed the one—Immense victory! It is no victory, there can be no glory in it; but if you can persuade men by example, by argument, by the accumulative power of human history, the moment men are convinced there is a great calm; the moment the heart is won the gun is thrown away. If we could but persuade one another of this, if we could only be made to see that peace is infinitely grander than war, and that in war there is no grandeur at all, then man would rush to meet man, and the brotherhood of the world would be brought in by the Cross of Christ. This would sound feeble in the military market-place; this would be received with sneering or with forbearing mockery: yet this is true, this is the eternal sanctuary; until the Christ rises in the Christian heart there can be

no victory and there can be no peace. Yet we think we must be doing something; that is often the mischief of it all. Oh, could we simply fall into the almighty arms of God! In history God has wrought great wonders, and He can work great wonders again. Do leave God some room in His own universe!

But this would kill all the little clever men. Yes, it would; there is no doubt about that; and we are prepared to let them die in peace. I would ask you to be so good as to go to this grand old elm tree in December; I want leaves to grow on that tree, I want all these great delicate branches to sustain a great mass of green foliage: what have you to say about this? Well, of course we must use the means. Very well, I will leave the garden to you for three days that you may use the means. On returning I find that they have been using the means; they have heated all the boilers in the house, boiled all the blankets and sheets in the house, and have bandaged the old elm with the hot flannel. They are using the means. And then they call for more blankets and for more sheets, and for more calico and for more stuff of all kinds, and boil and boil is the motto of the time; because they are using the means. Now you have bandaged the fine old limbs? Yes, now we shall see something presently. What will you see? You will see all the blankets getting cold; and that is about all you will see. Now let us come to this same tree in late February, in opening March, and what has happened? I see little buds forming here; I think I see some little green leaves shaping up there. What has done it? Not man. What has done it? God. How? By using His means.

Our collection to-day is to be given to the Indian Famine Fund. Every penny you give will be handed over to that fund. I will not plead; famine is a more eloquent speaker than any man ever was. The people are dying in thousands and tens of thousands, and you and I have loads more than we can eat. It is an exceeding great and bitter cry, but God has given us the means to use it to allay that cry, and to bring about the true peace, the peace of brotherhood. If I urged the case, I would enfeeble it. Enough to say the people are dying of hunger. "Whoso hath this world's good and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" He may be orthodox, but he is not godly.

[*The collection amounted to £160.*]

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[*Thursday Morning, July 19th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

THE Lord reigneth. Can there be evil in the city, and the Lord not have done it? Is not the devil Thine? are not all the evil powers under Thy control? Deliver us from the atheism of unbelief; give us perfect confidence in Thy personality and sovereignty. Though Thou hast made us drink the wine of astonishment, may our astonishment become final praise. Thou art smiting the earth with heavy strokes to-day, 'Thou art breaking it in pieces; wilt Thou heal it again, or shall we see with the dying century the dying world? Thou wilt yet do great things; 'Thou hast shown us great and terrible things in righteousness, and Thou hast yet more to declare, more than has entered into the dreams of man. May we wait silently, patiently, and know the religiousness of rest. Do Thou silence all noise, and drive out of the way into unseen and obscure places those who think that the kingdom of God is a kingdom of uproar. The Lord bless us with the grace of quietness and with the eloquence of silence. And we say this at the Cross, in the name of Him who was quiet, silent, omnipotent, whose power was proved by His repose. Amen.

XCVII.

DIVINE LEADERSHIP.

"Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?"—PSALM lx. 9.



DOM was a rock, a rock city. It was all rocks; it was scooped, so to say, out of a rock. Who could take it? who could lead the conqueror into the midst of Edom, where the rock-throne stood, a memorial and a challenge? You should aim at taking strong cities. There are some little things it is really not worth while doing; the less will follow the greater. Let your ambition be high, holy, and therefore unselfish. Do not go about carving heads on cherry stones; do not fuss about the cracking of a nut. So many people are swelteringly busy about doing nothing. This man dreams of the strong city and a great place, and in the name of God he will have it. I should like to see more, shall I say, reckless ambition in the Church. What puling talk we hear! it is very sad and utterly unwholesome. Yet we receive it with "loud applause." Oh, that loud applause will be the ruin of the Church. A man here and there and everywhere all over the globe cries out against the liquor traffic. What insanity! The Church of the living God could terminate the liquor traffic in a month. We do not want any paper resolutions about this; if the Church that gathers around the Cross of Christ would say from its heart, "No more liquor traffic" in this country or in that, nothing could stand against that blast of doom. Yet it seems to suit the constitution of some men, and gives them a topic to talk about, when other topic there is none, to speak elaborately about taking down this or that idol, be it liquor, or lust, or gambling, or war, or monopoly. Everything is in the hands of Christ's Church. Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world? You have not risen to your high honour; the most of you

is criminally asleep. Do you think I have in the heat of the moment given you bad syntax? then you have not heard me as I meant to be heard. The most of you, individual man, the most of you, the one creature, is asleep. I want to be awakened by the power of the Spirit of God. Every man of us could do ten times more than he is doing if he were awake.

The man of the text will not rest until he gets that great rock-city. He will not be content with the demolition of little huts by the wayside. He says, I must ascend to Edom, the great rock-town; I must ascend its throne; it is so spoken in the oracles, so written in the archives; who will bring me, lead me—who? We know the answer; there is but one reply, because there is but one Omnipotence. He will complete our salvation, and build His throne on the overturned thrones of false empires. I think this man will succeed because he has a true appreciation of the situation. He is no flippant speaker; he measures his epithets, he acknowledges that it is a "strong" city. That is where so many nations get wrong to-day. They think they can snuff out anything that is going on in South Africa; if they send two or three lame men there it will be enough to terrify anybody if they have a gun. Our statesmen are very great—all they have to do is to prove it. Of course it is only necessary to send out some retired Sindbad for the purpose of snuffing out anything in China. We will never learn to calculate; we do not know the mystery of really summing up forces and consequences; thus we risk many lives and lose many causes and turn history in some instances into disgrace. Never underrate your opponent; never suspect that he has discharged his last shot; if he be a wise opponent, in any department of life, he is husbanding his resources and he is training his strength. Do not sneer at the opposition. There is no genius in sneering; any poor creature that the devil would hardly have in his pay can scoff at other men. There is no statesmanship in sneering. Remember that the Edom you are wishing to conquer is a strong city, and you must go to it with a strong hand, and with your whole hand, and no hand is whole that has not the heart in it.

It is, therefore, a strong city; but though strong it is not invincible, it is not unconquerable, it can be subdued and brought under the feet of true conquest. Shall I tell you what I have found the most obstinate and nearly invincible foes? You may have heard their names; I have lived a lifetime under their tyranny; they have put thorns in my pillow, they have drugged my purest water, they have followed me up the pulpit, and on to the platform and into the press. They are terrible foes, but in the strength of God every one of them may be crushed. I wonder if you know the name of the first great foe? It is Prejudice. It has no shape, it has no traceable pedigree, it never stands up to be measured for a suit of clothes; but it never sleeps, it goes about night and day colouring everything, misjudging everything, and turning wine into vinegar, and love into suspicion. Once take up a prejudice against a man, and who can kill it? The answer is, You may tell me so, but I have heard it. Some people think all they have to do is to believe what they hear. The only thing you have got to do is never to believe a word you hear, and only half of what you see,—a good old saying, a saw whose teeth will find their way through many a rude block. Have you any prejudice against any man? You pray, but have you a prejudice? Get out that little devil; have no prejudice against any man, have so much prejudice for him as to give the enemy hard work to get you to come over to his side. Believe more, believe better, take a kindlier view of all life and all men; it is the sweetest piety, and it helps you mightily to grow in grace.

There is another foe that stands in the way of our getting into the true Edom: that foe is Superstition. I would rather a man were superstitious than that he were atheistic. I can make something of a man who has an element of the *super* in him; even superstition may become the supernatural; but the atheist—there is nothing to work upon, there is no deepness of earth, there is no opportunity for making impression and progress. The negative soul who can save? But there are little mean superstitions we should get rid of as soon as we possibly can. Superstitions

there are many which stand in the way of an intelligent, robust, and beneficent faith. Yet I like a little superstition; I have a good deal of it, I owe a good deal to it. I got it all from my mother, who would not be in the house unless there was a sprig of rowan tree somewhere; that kept the bogies away. It was no use sending a whole academy down to talk to her; she would admit every word the academy said, and then go to see that the rowan tree on the edge of the clock was still there. It was all right. Nor would she have a peacock feather in the house; all peacock feathers were with her associated with some kind of doom, distress, sudden death, and marvellous ministries not to be named. But she could pray; but for that superstitious side of her nature she could not have prayed as she did, taking a square hold of God and saying, I will not let Thee go, though the morning is lightening on the hills, until Thou bless me. There are superstitions therefore that are innocent, and that are helpful, and that indeed indicate a large, a rich nature; but there are other superstitions that ought to be driven out and abandoned for ever. The superstition, for instance, that you can only be saved by going to one particular church. You have no idea, those of you who are from further and larger countries, how impossible it is to get an Englishman to believe that anybody can sing acceptably to heaven who does not sing out of his hymnbook. He will admit that other people may by some strong stretching of the mercy and pity of God be some day and in some way saved so as to be just inside heaven, but only those who share his pew and his hymnbook and his minister can really in any re-creative and ennobling sense be saved. Get rid of the notion; it is infidelity, it is unbelief, it is want of magnanimity, it is wanting in God. Jesus came to save the world, and that is the space over which our thought and love and holy expectancy must dwell and lovingly linger.

And who can ever overget the strong opponent which goes by the name of Society? Were you ever in Society? I was once in it; I have never expressed a wish to go into it again; I can do without it; I like the open air, the fresh breeze, the singing bird; I do not like the new way to dance down into hell.

I love sincerity, frankness, whiteheartedness, and not the insincerity and hypocrisy and ambiguity that mean inward and inmost falsehood. You will never get on in "Society"—I beg the reporter to print that word with strong quotation marks—unless you can lie a good deal. Falsehood is the card to present at the door of a certain kind of so-called high Society. The fact is, all Christians, Sunday-school teachers, and Christian Endeavourers, have begun at the wrong end of the town. The lies are told at the West End; the curses are uttered at the East. It is more difficult to get hold of falsehood than to get hold of vulgar profanity; the veneer, the so-called refinement, the superstition about homage, descent, degree, and precedence—all these considerations make it almost impossible for any honest man to be either in Society or in Parliament, and almost impossible to be in the Cabinet. I pity the East End; it has been belaboured with Christian sticks for many a long year. Poor East End! where the poverty is, where the slums are, where the ignorance is supposed to breed fast and to prevail,—to the neglect of the West End, where the devil lives in palaces of gold. Who will take this great Edom? who will lead us into it? You tell me, of course, there are exceptions, and that I should have told you in a moment or two if you had not impatiently interrupted me with the suggestion. Of course there are brilliant exceptions both in the East End and in the West End. Some of the finest heroism of modern English life you will find in the East End; some of the noblest self-denial and self-suppression you will find in the West End. I am not dealing with exceptional cases, even though they can be proved to be numerous; I am dealing with this tragical and terrible fact, that environment does not necessitate a certain quality of character; I am dealing with the fact that a man may have an abundance of wealth and social honour, prestige and influence, and yet in the midst of it all he can be boring a pit down into hell, and nobody may know that he is using his efforts in that direction. The last book of this kind that I read I closed with the remark, "This is Baedeker's new guide to perdition." It is not enough to answer that such instances do occur, instances of insincerity and selfishness and

abominable vice ; they may occur, but I am not bound to paint them. There are other things that I would paint even if I were compelled to paint some of the blacker sides of life. When I write my book on life as I have found it, the villain will possibly have his place, and the liar, but there will be large spaces full of green grass and fruit trees and singing birds and purling brooks and sweet women and hearts that lift the earth very nearly to heaven.

Now who will take the great Edom of heathenism, whether social, or English, American, or pagan, over seas ? They tell me the time has come to kill all the missionaries, or in some less desperate way to get rid of them. I do not believe it ; I still believe in missionaries. I am not called upon to believe in the infallibility or the impeccability of missionaries, but I am called upon to believe that Jesus Christ instructed His Church to conquer the world. I know no other way of doing it than by taking a gospel that has been experienced to a people that have never heard of it. The great Edom of heathenism is not to be taken other than by beneficence, kind-heartedness, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the Cross. I am not sure that the great Edom of heathenism is to be taken by mere argument, by intellectualism in any form ; I believe that our greatest conquest will run along the line of sympathy, inquiry, offered brotherhood, and all manner of kindness and service rendered to the nations that we would gladly capture in the name of Christ. I believe the medical missionary has a great future. He has an advantage over the mere speaker ; he is appreciated as one who is able to do something material, bodily, and something concrete and immediate. I believe there is an instrument called the forceps, and I have understood that the forceps can do more with an angry tooth than all the medicines in the chemist's shop. But we must not push the analogy of the forceps too far or too recklessly ; there is another strength, there is a sweeter violence. A man once said to me when denouncing missions and missionaries, "There is only one thing to be done with the black, and that is to thrash him." If that man called himself a Christian I would deny his right and title to the name. The one thing that

will conquer the Edom of paganism, heathenism, and all manner of savagery, is the old, old leaf from the tree of life—the love of Christ. It needs time, its application requires great skill; but the cure is in it, the healing is in the veins of that leaf, and the juice will ooze out to heal the heart of the world.

We may never be so near victory as when we are in despair. The Church may perhaps need some time for dejection; the almost despair that comes upon it now and then may be medicinal and may be of the nature of a tonic. I have noticed that Beelzebub is never so nearly ruining himself as when he seems to be having everything his own way; he is in very deed pulling his house about his own head; Beelzebub can in that sense cast out Beelzebub—by satiety, by nauseousness, by a rejection because of that kind of repletion which disables and disgusts the very appetite which it pretends to feed. I have more hope of the profane swearer than I have of the polite agnostic. You ask me to repeat that sentence; I respond with pleasure. I have more hope of a man who curses and swears than I have of a man who is indifferent to the whole religious idea and who pretends not to be able to know anything about Deity and Infinity. The former man has passion, he has feeling; where there is feeling you can work upon it, you can convert it, and you can help to its sanctification; but where there is death or indifference or mere intellectual apathy, what can be done with it? the trumpet has not been made in heaven that can awaken such men from such graves. My distress is not about those who are really and genuinely opposed to us; my difficulty is with those who agree with us because they have no energy in this hot weather to differ from us. The weather has been such that I think I would be quite willing to carry all those penny resolutions that anybody desired to have carried. The heat determines in some degree your intellectual temperature; the sun regulates your clothing. It is not for you to say you will wear a light suit and a very light straw hat; it is not for you to say anything about that; it is the sun that settles your clothing and fixes your headgear. I cannot do with indifference. For God's sake oppose me if you can-

not agree with me ! But to say that you are really indisposed to look at the thing, and it is really so very hot that the only thing you want the preacher to do is to sit down. You can never make anything of that kind of creature either in the family or in the Church or in the parliament or in the market-place. You can work with energy or against energy, but indifference is the most terrible foe of the Christian cause. You are in great despair, my brother ? Well, your despair need not be more than temporary. You cannot be in deeper despair than I have often been ; my days and nights are now largely spent in despondency ; I lay my weary head upon the pillow of dejection. Sometimes the enemy says, The cause is going against you, Christians are decreasing in number, statistics are all against the so-called Saviour of the world ; Jesus of Nazareth whom you worship is at the bottom of the poll. The devil would take advantage of me. I have been by the grace of God a strong man in many directions for many years, but when I am told that my Lord is at the bottom of the poll after two thousand years' hard work, loving devotion, heroic suffering, I wonder how it is. Then comes a voice booming and thundering along the pathways of the wind, Hold on ! He will not leave His soul in hell, neither will He suffer His Holy One to see corruption. For that long resounding bugle note of optimism I thank kind heaven, and I receive it not as music only but as an oath set to music.

Hymn 531 : "All people that on earth do dwell."

Hymn 45 : "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place."

Solo "The Cross of Jesus" *Sankey*
Miss EDITH WADDY.

DOXOLOGY.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the Triune God abide with us, till we all meet in the land of light, within the gate which is beautiful as a stone most precious !

[*Sunday Morning, July 22nd, 1900.*]

Prayer.

OTHER gods have had dominion over us, but the Lord is God and the true God that comforteth the heart and lifteth up and giveth sound healing to them that are broken and crushed. We know that there is balm in Gilead, and that there is a Physician there ; may we seek the garden of the Lord and the herbs that were meant for healing. Is there not a tree the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations ? is there not a balm for the heart that cries out in its bitterness and solitude ? Thou knowest our life, its whole scheme and purpose and end ; all things are tending to one grand issue. If we could lay hold of this truth by the gracious power of Thy love, we should be at rest, we should be rich with a sense of security, we should be as those whose chamber is in the rock. Teach us that we are but at one point in the process ; all things work together for good to them that love God ; there is a defect in the love, therefore there is a defect in the vision ; if we could see with pure hearts, we would see God. Thou knowest the blinding effect of this lower air, the cruel dust that cuts the eyes whenever the tempest blows : Thou knowest our frame, Thou rememberest that we are dust, yea, Thou sayest that we are but as a wind that passeth away. Therefore dost Thou stoop in mercy to our poor case ; Thou dost halt for us ; yea, the sun must stand still, and the moon must tarry because there are some who are faint and who are weary. God is love ; if we could but know this as emphatically as we say it, we should dwell in a temple invincible, yea, unapproachable by any of the fiery bolts of the enemy, we should live away on the mountain tops with God Himself, and smile at the noise and smoke of the dark alley. We come from time to time to be refreshed and renewed and restored ; for that purpose we have come to Thy throne now. We have come by way of the Cross ; we have come in the spirit of faith and love and holy expectancy. Give us grace and power to say we will not let Thee go until Thou dost bless us ; give us power greater than Thine own, may we struggle with Omnipotence and prevail ; may we throw the Lord's angel in this holy wrestle, and arise in the grey morning with a new name. We thank Thee for all Thy mercies : sometimes we remember our afflictions more than we remember our blessings ; but this is like us, we are weak, forgetful, thankless. If we could but see all Thy mercies, they would drive away the shadow of our griefs, and we should say, under the brightening and expanding revelation, God is love. Wilt Thou come to our hearts according to their necessity, inasmuch as they pray in the name of Jesus, without which name there is no prayer, no key

that opens heaven. Some are in great joy : their delight is unspeakable, their purpose has been accomplished, and their house stands forth in the full noonlight. Others are full of sorrow : there is a soreness in the heart, for which there is no unction in all the compositions of men ; a wounded spirit who can bear ? Yet even this miracle is possible to Thee ; with men this is impossible, with God all things are possible. Send the weary and broken-hearted away to begin a new tune, to enter upon all the mystery and the holiday of a nobler psalm. If any are in perplexity, being in a divided mind, not knowing which way to take and willing to take the way that is right, say unto such, we humbly pray Thee, This is the way, walk in it, and at the end find heaven. And if any are mourning those who are in danger here or there, at home or in distant places, who are filled with wonder and distress and sense of troubled mystery, the Lord's light be upon such, a full light, showing that the grace of God is the greatest fact in creation. May we rest in that grace and wait for its fuller display. The little ones at home Thou wilt not forget ; the widow and the orphan Thou wilt severally remember, for Thou art pledged to their recollection ; and the prodigal who is far away, sentenced by our own love to penal servitude, the man that lies beyond our poor prayers even at their best—if Thou canst bring him in Thou wilt. Remember not against us our broken vows, our shattered resolutions, our impoverished aspirations and ambitions ; when we uttered them we meant to execute and fulfil them every one ; but we are broken reeds. The Lord hear us and pity us and make us young again as in former days. Amen

XCVIII.

THE LIGHT OF OTHER DAYS.

"As in former years."—MAL. iii. 4.



It seems as if we heard God's own voice in these words and the words that accompany them. This is not a man talking about the light of other days ; it is, in the person of the prophet, God Himself speaking, and saying, in effect, O that it were as it used to be ! what times we had together in the long ago, in the former years, in the days of old ! Things have gone wrong since then ; the house is not what it used to be : O if these people would only return, repent, and give me the opportunity of saying, I forgive you all,

we should bring back the centuries we have lost, we should make new time, we should make forty-eight hours instead of twenty-four in the day; and by my grace and power we should accomplish the miracle of living our lives over again. O if they would offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; if Judah and Jerusalem would render unto God the things that are God's; if they would only leave off this miserable non-worship of self-idolatry; then the days of old and the former years would come back, and the past in all its dreariest aspects and the present in all its hideousness would be forgotten; we should go back to the morning of things and exchange our love tokens and be happy as we used to be. God can be very womanly; God can forgive as much as a mother; and whatever a mother can forgive God taught her to forgive, so that it comes back all to God. The Lord wants the house to be as it once was. We have bricked up some windows, and He would tear out the filling-up, and He would let the light in just where it used to shine and make flowery shadows on the old furniture. This is what we want to do in our little way, to get back sixty-five years that we wasted. With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. To get back the time we spent with the devil, and have it all turned into springtime and summer and autumn days, days of wheat gathering and vine and olive hoarding. O! to be as it was when he was here, when she was at hand, when the little one made the house ring again. How to recover the lost gold, how to recover it out of ourselves? With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. When we were young we could learn anything; the mind was as molten wax, and would take any impress and take it instantly, and almost hold the seal that gave it; but now we forget the text of the day, and as for yesterday, surely it had no text—yesterday is a blank. O that it were with us as in the olden days and the time that is gone down the river! Useless mourning is matched by useless penance. We cannot get the days back again, but we can think about them, and the very meditation upon them may be a kind of recurrence, a surprise of return, a mystery of living over again in a kind of haze and dream all the days, specially the days that were best.

You remember some of the former days; the days, you know, when our love saw no difficulties. Love has always been blind; in that sweet sense may love never get its eyesight! To be blind is sometimes to be right and happy and secure. When love begins to see difficulties you may close the windows, and turn the key, and send in the man who will buy up wrecked happiness for bronze. If love should give way the mother has given way, and we always said that as long as mother was there we need not trouble about grate or cupboard or bed to sleep on. But when love gives way, sell your house, go out into the wilderness, and by accident drop in the sea if you can. Our love once saw no difficulties. It was raining—yes—but with the kind of rain that did not give one cold, with a kind of rain that never really got upon more than the surface of the garment. Now if there was a spot of rain it would be difficult for us to go out, and impossible for us to go to church. There was a little rain three hours ago; that is enough, we will live on that; that rain three hours ago will save us from going on that errand of beneficence that we almost intended to go but wanted an excuse for not going. Love never said, It is a long way and she may not be at home. Love never made a poor miserable speech like that; when a man begins to talk so, cut him off, he is no man,—a kind of withering beast. Would that we had these old, old days when we saw no difficulty, when we said, Of course it can be done: who doubts it? I will do it. Who will go first? I. Who will stay out longest? I will. Who will brave the danger? Why, of course, I am here on purpose to do that. Now we turn tired so soon; now we see that there is a lion in the way; now we think we will give place to the young. Why, you should always be young, if you are growing in grace, if you are rooted in God, if you are expanding in the summer climate of heaven; you should grow towards youth. O for the old days, when we had no banking account! That account has ruined so many people. They were always willing to give so long as they kept their money in their pocket, but when they gave another man charge of it they did not like to trouble the other man. When you were worth fifty pounds and had it all in the secret drawer at

home it was within touch, so that when poverty touched your sleeve and said, How much of that have you given to the cause of the poor? you said, Of course it has all been given to the poor, and I must help you all I can. But when you put it in the bank you seemed to put it a long way off. I am speaking of you when you were quite a young man, when fifty pounds was of great value to you; now it is nothing, it is a mere scratch of the pen; in fact you get other people to write and you simply sign it, and in five minutes you may forget it; fifty pounds cannot be to you now what it was when you were about eighteen, nineteen, and on to twenty-five. You used to count the sum in sovereigns, in half sovereigns; and you used to pile the sovereigns on the sovereigns and look at the little pillar, and if a little child came near you in any manner of distress you would not mind handing one of the little coins over to the charge of the child. But now that you are sixty and have fifteen thousand pounds on call at the bank, would it be possible for me to get a sovereign from you? From many it certainly would, and right lovingly would they give it; but I am speaking rather of the human disposition than of the individual instance, and I want to find out how it came to be that things changed with us. For they have changed with me as much as with any man: how did that change take place? O that it were with me as in the former days!

And who cannot recall those happy years when the soul was absolutely without a suspicion? Once we believed everybody; of course it never occurred to us that anybody could be saying anything that was not true. "Let your yea be yea, and your nay nay." That is the very soul of the kingdom of God,—sincerity, simplicity, directness, emphasis, and candour. Not an elaborate and pompous theology; the kingdom of God is never in that; always it is in the yea yea, nay nay, the soul in its primrose simplicity. Some persons are blessed with this unsuspectingness all the way through life; other people are always burdened and blighted by the action of suspicion. Such people never go into a hotel but they think that the first porter that gets hold of their portmanteau will steal it, and the porter was there on purpose, and they knew it,

and the moment they saw him they felt it. What a weary life, what a most horrible self-deprivation of enjoyment! Poor people were always coming about our house in former days, and I always suspected them, and perhaps suspected them more in pretence than in reality, in order that I might inoculate another mind with suspicion — a mind that never suspected, a mind that never dreamed that anybody could say anything but the simple direct and absolute truth. How old was that unsuspecting soul when it departed this life? Two days old. Of such is the kingdom of God. When she shut up some poor thievish looking old party in the shoe room and came and told us that she was there, and was pouring out a tale of distress and poverty, a relative said to her, "But, Emma, she may be stealing your boots!" "Well," said she, "they would not fit her." What a dainty thief she must have been! — a mendicant that would have taken all the boots and sold them all for eighteenpence to anybody that would give her the money. But the loving and pure one said in effect, It is simply impossible; they would not fit the poor woman. It is well for some of you to be suspicious, because you keep a certain section of social economy going; but I long for the days when we never suspected anybody, when we thought there were no wrinkles in any heart, when we were perfectly sure that what was said to us was said in truth and innocence, simplicity and love, and might be relied upon to the last tick and syllable of the speech.

I sometimes want the days to come back when my confidence was absolutely strong, when I rose with a simple creed and worked it out all day, and then laid my head upon it at night and slept well. There was a time when I thought that everything would come right, when I was quite sure that everything was right because God was in it. And then a staff broke, and pierced this poor reliant hand; then a nightmare swallowed up a dream and turned it into horror; then one of the pillars of society gave way, and it was said by evil spirits in the darkened air, The trustee has fallen, the steward has broken his faith. Thus we seem to grow away from the kingdom of God; it appears as if we got worse and

worse as we passed along the pathways of time. No wonder that we sometimes have wished that we could walk backwards and go to heaven through the cradle. How wondrously strange is human nature! never so strange as when it sees the evil and runs after it; never so strange as when it sees the right and yet the wrong pursues. The worst of it is that we become so attainted and so poisoned that we attain a kind of degree as if in arts, because we are so proficient in the detection of other people's vices. There used to be a time when we thought that if a man looked us straight in the face he was very honest. One of the most honourable and conscientious men I ever knew, never looked me in the face, and always looked, not as if he were a criminal merely, but a criminal proved and sentenced and just starting on the journey to penal servitude. It is time the sophism of looking you straight in the face was done away; even that may be the most advanced form of lying. What you have to be and do, what I have to take care of, is this, to be right, and never mind how we look. If our heart condemn us not, then indeed are we free and may take the rest of God.

There were days and years, I remember them well, when faith, religious faith, was a burning and flaming enthusiasm. Now we apologise for going to worship; we tell the person not going that we will be back presently. We go to church with an explanation; we say that you may almost confidently rely upon us being back before the clock strikes one hour. Then you are not going to a honey festival, you are not going to a festival of twelve courses, you are not going to dine with some great social magnate who will keep you until the small hours in the morning. Thou Man of the five wounds, with the crown of thorns, pity me! Thou shouldst crush me with Thy foot; I spend more time in eating and drinking and toasting and roaring and shouting at Bacchanalian feasts than I spend in the Sunday school. It used to be so otherwise; before we grew tall enough to lift the champagne glass and shout the Bacchanalian cry and "Ha, ha! what, another?" in the uproar of the feast, we did sometimes belong to the Sunday school, to the missionary

society. Now we are glad when any man arises to give us an excuse for giving up our old ways; if he will hint that there is something wrong in this page or on that page, enough, we are quite willing if he can prove that, then we are away to serve the devil. Not that we care for criticism or archæology or any verbal difficulties, but we are glad that men have arisen to point all these out, because it gives us chance to go with an easier conscience to redouble our social iniquities. Will the enthusiastic days of faith ever return, when men are battling at the church gates and saying, Open to me the gates of Zion; I will enter in and be glad and shout the Lord's song? I wonder.

Yet I am in no mood of despair. I never remember any of the great wealthy figures of the pagan world taking much interest in religion. How can Cræsus find time to read the Prayer-book? Blessed in many respects are the poor, and wise, in some senses to be carefully guarded, are the people who have only a dozen books on shelves which they themselves made after working hours. I well remember having a triangular bookcase, if case it could be called, the first shelf about thirty inches long, and the second about five-and-twenty, and the third shelf decreasing in proportion; and the green cords tying it all up to a nail in the wall; and there was Zimmermann on Solitude and Borrow's "Bible in Spain," and two or three or half a dozen more books, more to me than ever the British Museum library was or is likely to be. Then I preached morning, noon, and night, in the open air, at the doors of blacksmiths and carpenters and wheelwrights and anywhere and everywhere, and I cried unto the sons of men saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and ye fools hate knowledge? And then I got other books, tormenting books, polysyllabled books, and began to wonder whether it could be right to go out every Thursday night to the prayer-meeting. We have something to thank our limitations for. You would not have been half the man you are if you had not been brought up in that little country manse away on the hillside where your only recreation was to be found in your father's library. And now have you grown so that you cannot come out in the evening or take any part in the

school, and begin to suspect that there are a great number of societies of a philanthropic kind that you could easily dispense with? O for the old, old days, when the Sabbath was too short, the hymn too cold, and the sacrifice unspeakably too small! I wonder if these days will ever return? Surely. The Lamb has yet to be married, and when He joins His bride the earth will see happier times than ever.

SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 22ND, 1900.

Anthem 14 .. "As the hart panteth" .. *Mason*

The Lord's Prayer.—*Field.*

Hymn 40 .. "Lift up to God the voice of praise."

1st Lesson. Isaiah xlii. 8-12.

8. [*The Lord is speaking to His Son Jesus Christ*], I am the Lord [*the greatest revelation ever made to the human mind*]: that is My name [*My nature, My being*]: and My glory will I not give to another [*except reflectively*], neither My praise to graven images [*all mud. Man is mud, but also deity: and the graven image is only the one*].

9. Behold, the former things are come to pass [*the things We talked of in eternity*], and new things do I declare [*the old new, the new old. The English has but one "new"—for a paving stone or for a seraph: it is a poor tongue*]: before they spring forth I tell you of them [*that is the true prophecy*].

10. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof [*beat up the whole material into an ineffable musicale*].

11. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice [*the wilderness is a city, the city may be all wilderness*], the village that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains [*let there be no silent spot*].

12. Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare His praise in the islands. [*Curious, mingled talk, but having a resonance of music about it somehow.*]

Chant 67 Psalm lxxxiv *Norris*

2nd Lesson. Heb. ii. 9-12.

Anthem .. "Sing unto the Lord" .. *Sydenham*

Hymn 386 .. "O for a closer walk with God."

Offertory and Solo:

"If with all your hearts" (*Elijah*) *Mendelssohn.*

Mr. WILLIAM A. SHEEN.

Hymn 435 (*Part III.*): "Jerusalem the golden."

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, from Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, abide with us until we enter the city where there is one day and one Light. Amen.

[*Thursday Morning, July 26th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

WE cry unto Thee, Thou living God, because Thou hast made us, and not we ourselves ; Thou hast made us in Thine own image and likeness, and we cry for Thee as meant for men. Behold, Thou hast all that we need ; Thou hast made us an-hungered, that we may come to Thee for satisfaction ; Thou hast made us burn with thirst, that we may cry out for the living river of the living God. There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God. To such streams we come ; to Thy courts we repair for shelter and rest and deepening sense of security. Here we meet the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, three Persons in one God, one in three, three in one,—the mystery of all number and the contradiction of all materialism. May we enter into this mystery, may we know the mystery of blood, may we know that the whole earth is redeemed by blood, that, dig where we may, we find the root of the Cross, and, look high as our vision can carry us, the lines of the Cross shine through the lustre of the sun. The Lord help us in all things, that we may be wisely strong, and strongly wise, and, having finished our day and generation, may enter into the joy which comes after the sleep which Thou dost send on tired eyes. Amen.

XCIX.

GROWING GREAT IDEAS.

"A thousand generations."—DEUT. vii. 9.



OW to begin to teach the supreme ideas of time and space, and God and heaven, and eternity; that is the subject. We are familiar with these great words, so familiar indeed with them that we think nothing about them. We thus ruin ourselves by reading religious books and going to religious services. Nothing so ruinous as going to church, if we do not go in the right spirit and with adequate intelligence of the meaning of the act. I know nothing so really bad for the soul as religion, if not rightly comprehended and understood. It poisons the mind, it unsettles the balance of things, it introduces and encourages confusion. This was God's great difficulty, greater infinitely than making stars. How to begin to teach the supreme ideas, the all-consummating and all-sublimating ideas; that was the difficulty. There was no difficulty with chaos; God said . . . and it was done. Chaos has always been obedient, because it could not be disobedient. And that is an obedience that is worth nothing. How to introduce, by some glint, some door ajar, what God really wanted to make man, was the supreme difficulty. The idea would have been wholly too much at first, it would have been overwhelming, the mere utterance of it would have staggered the reason. The subtle way in which God begins the lesson is most memorable and instructive to all teachers and preachers. He does not begin with the great word "Eternal," He finishes with that. No great speaker delivers his climax in the first sentence. But how to get man to know that the things that were round about him were no things, and were utterly without value, except in the degree in which they pointed to something beyond themselves.

For instance, how to introduce the great word Heaven in its spiritual and ideal sense. It is introduced, therefore, first of all in its material sense. The Lord makes a great canopy—oh so azure blue, and so written over with cloud parables—and He says, We will call that heaven. It is no heaven, but that would do as a toy-word, and that would be an excellent beginning in object-teaching. Said the Lord God Almighty in effect, This great space with all its great poem of light we will call heaven. It was not heaven as we understand the word now, but it would not have done to have introduced the truly spiritual heaven all at once. The Lord is a wise Father-Mother, so He begins with nouns and objects and shining lights and glittering points that want to show their bigness, but distance will not allow them. He takes a great advance when to Abram He says, Arise and go forth, and I will show thee a land, not like this country at all, but a land flowing with milk and honey; a land so beautiful thou hast never dreamed it; the night is day, and the day is sevenfold in brightness, yet there is no smiting heat, no blinding glare; as for the soil of that fair country, if thou dost imprint upon it one footstep, in thy footprint there will come up a wheat-field; come! And when Abram heard of the land he took his staff and went forth to see this mystery of ground and growth and abundance and satisfaction. That was all he could take in at the time. It is thus that God instructs us and encourages us; He says, You will have a house fifty times larger than this, and a house that is furnished with gold and ivory and all manner of beautiful things, and you will have no need of labour and anxiety about it, everything will every morning be spotless and radiant, will you come? And the answer is, Well, I think I shall leave everything else and go out that I may dwell in that fair house. The roof is slated with suns and the walls are steeped with a blood colour relieved by shooting light; I think I will go. That was the only idea which the poor people could take in at the time,—a great house, a wonderful land, a jewel beautiful with summer made with hands. So in the early mythological times they went to see these fair scenes, and never saw them. How? Never saw them,

because their education made them despise such mean instances of beauty and light; they saw so much on the road that the promise simply faded away, and little by little the Lord said, The heaven I am thinking about, and that I mean you to secure, is beyond those beautiful clouds; you never could be content with mud and soil and ground and something you could set your feet upon; do you not already begin to feel that I had a larger meaning in my welcoming words, thus introducing the idea of heaven? What then? As the generations came and went there arose in the family of man a generation that said, We seek a country out of sight, we seek a city whose builder and maker is God. But did you not come out to see a land flowing with milk and honey? Yes, is the reply, that was our first idea, but God has kept company with us, He has shown so much to our hearts, He has interpreted the ideality of things so clearly to us little by little, that now we not only despise the land flowing with milk and honey, but we despise the earth and all the jewels of mud called stars and planets; we want to see a country out of sight; show it to our longing hearts, and to our waiting eyes. Thus did God establish the idea of heaven amongst men: first a great canopy, a magnificent and translucent tent, then something more, and less material, then a city whose builder and maker is God; and thus and thus the generations multiply and grow in capacity and intelligence and spiritual sensitiveness, until nothing less than God Himself will satisfy their desire.

There is a lesson to us poor preachers. We begin by thrusting eternity upon the attention of the people all at once. We should promise them something less but something typical, something that carries a parable in its heart and whose lips are warm with a poem. But we expect to get the people to understand the Trinity in one morning sermon. We begin at the wrong end; we are poor tools; I cannot call us workmen yet; we should begin at the alphabet but that our vanity will never stoop to it; we know some words of five syllables, and we are determined the world shall hear of them. That is the reason we make no progress in establishing the kingdom of heaven amongst men. We do not begin at the right point and go for-

ward by a process of evolutionary education until we make the people despise earth and time and all things material, because they feel something awakening within them which cries out for the living God.

Change the point of starting. How difficult it was for God to get the idea of philanthropy into the minds of the people ! Philanthropy means love of man, love of human nature because it is human nature, and being human nature is allied to the divine and all-redeeming personality of God. Did the Lord begin by telling the people to love everybody ? He did not, He ignored "everybody" and fixed the attention of the people upon themselves and their wives and families and their tribes and their nation ; and then the Lord dropped a word about another section of humanity. He said, You will now and then come upon the "stranger." That is a new word ; we know ourselves and our households and the tribe to which we belong, but if we see a stranger we will slay him. Thus the Lord created an opportunity for Himself : He said, If you see a stranger, invite him into your house ; he may be tired on his journey, let him sit down at least outside your door ; the stranger may happen to come to you at sundown, at the preparation before the sabbath ; you will not think of allowing the poor wayfarer to go out on the sabbath day, you will therefore have a stranger within your gates and you must treat him as if he were one of the family. What a subtle method of proceeding ; how remote the point of approach, yet how direct and sure ! If the stranger, said the Lord in effect, should happen to be in need, you will show that you make a right use of the bounty I have given you by letting him share your load. There is some weather in which you would not turn out a dog, so there is some weather when you would never think of allowing a stranger, even though he were not of your colour, to go from your door and be, as it were, the prey of the thunder storm and the keen lightning, of the awful winds that seem to shake the heavens. Do not let the stranger sit outside the family circle ; bring him in, he may be able to entertain you, to take part in your higher conversation, and in some way or other you may get hold of the man's heart and the man may get hold of your

hearts; and understand that if that is so you are not contracting Israel but expanding the social idea: will you do that? The answer is in the prayer of Solomon:—"And the stranger that shall come from other lands to see Thy people, Israel"—who knows but he may be converted to the living and true God? That is mission work; being neighbourly in a personal and distinct sense, being neighbourly in a national sense, so that one nation is the neighbour of another, and must have neighbourly courtesies and attentions rendered in due order; and who knows but that out of these national and international civilities the whole world may one day be at peace, an unbroken family of God? So Jesus Christ taught these Jews that the Samaritans were their neighbours. He said, There was a certain man who was wounded and overthrown on the road, and priests and Levites passed him by; but a certain Samaritan came where he was. Only Jesus, clothed with deity, could have dared such an expression in such an assembly. Thus the great Christianising, which is also the great fraternising, policy proceeded and expanded until it does seem now and then—with sad and terrible exceptions, which I trust are only momentary—as if the angel song would become the true song of the nations—"Peace on earth; goodwill toward men,"—goodwilling about one another, speeches in the parliament of man about benevolence and mutual trust.

Now we come to the third point of starting, which is the point of the text—"a thousand generations." What is the Lord intending to teach now? He has taught what the people can receive about a generation; in fact they have lived through a generation, they know that word very well, it is quite a simple word in their vernacular; a generation may be thirty years or thirty centuries, or whatever it is or whatever it was, it was a unit which could be in some sense realised by the people to whom the words were addressed. But God means more than this, and how can He begin to say what He means? If He said "immortality" nobody would understand what He was talking about at that time of the world's history and at that period of spiritual vision. So the Lord met the people where they could meet Him; He stooped to

their infancy, He spake their one-syllabled language. Having got the people to say that they knew the meaning of a generation, He proceeded thus; then two generations, then three generations, and the children smiled incredulously; four generations, then reason began to totter. More time was allowed to the poor little human mind to expand and fully arouse itself in broad daylight vigilance. Then the Lord said, "Even to the tenth generation," and we come to the words fourteen generations, and fourteen generations more, and fourteen generations more, and this is in the New Testament, and in the very first chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew—forty-two generations. Why, that reminds us that in the Bible in the olden time there was something said about a thousand generations; what is this? canst thou tell me, O man? And the answer of the man is, I cannot tell thee, I am overwhelmed, I am simply confused and bewildered. And the generations seemed to be set out in plots and sections. There is a wonderful division of the generations; they now come before us in groups—fourteen generations, and fourteen generations, and fourteen generations—what is this? Thus the Lord introduced the notion of immortality, for ever and ever and ever; and at length the grand revelation was made that Christ brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel; so we do not talk about a generation in heaven but about God's for-ever in the skies. We take the wrong way of reaching people; we begin with immortality, and nobody understands the word. That is a word into the full meaning of which we must grow. At first immortality may be so taught as to be the burden of life, the mere torment of existence. To live for ever, with our present notions of life—why, that is itself a kind of perdition. I would not live alway if this is life as we see round about us—married in the morning, dead at night; the mother cooing to her baby, and an unseen hand plucking it from her breast and drying up the fountain of life. If this is life, with all these grey grave-stones and cemeteries and clothed priests mumbling words about departing this life and a glorious resurrection; if this is life—broken hearts, tragedy everywhere, empty places, every room a sepulchre; if this is life we do not want immortality.

Thus we are called upon to sit down with the poor groping one and to teach a little at a time, quite a morsel of bread for young mouths will be quite enough. You see the little yellow brood in the nest, and the mother dropping in just enough for that poor little gaping throat to receive at once. It is wise waiting. Thus many a minister is thought to be very simple and commonplace because he follows the method of God in unfolding the mysteries of eternity. A little at a time; a drop of dew is better than the Atlantic Ocean under certain circumstances. And thus God teaches us that all His first meaning when He said, "a land flowing with milk and honey" was heaven; His first meaning when He said, "If the stranger should happen to fall thy way take him in for a night's lodging," was philanthropy; when He said "a thousand generations," He went as far as He possibly could at that time on the road to teach men that they were pilgrims for immortality. Little by little. The difficulty is, of course, that the congregation being so mixed a man who thinks he is a thousand miles further on than anybody else calls the preacher very commonplace, and the sermon very slow. He is no great man to make such foolish criticisms. The great soul waits for the slow; the great traveller says, "I would like to go on a thousand miles further, but here is a poor crippled pilgrim; stay until he is lifted into the chariot." So we must have teaching graded, a little here and a little further, more, and higher still, and then a step beyond, and then half-a-day's climbing up the mountain, and then sitting down. Do you sit down because you are going no further? Nay, we sit down because we are going on further; that is the true meaning of rest. When a man takes rest from his toil it is that he may resume it with a sturdier hand and with a firmer and more hopeful heart. Let us therefore be patient with one another. Great ideas are not to be rushed at, nor are great ideas to be rushed as by some impetuous and uncontrolled teacher or speaker. We must go at a wise pace, but go in the right direction, and the right direction is always upward.

A thousand generations, and all indebted to one

another. We are indebted to posterity. That would seem to be a paradox; how can we be indebted to people who are not yet born? It is an infantile question. We are all indebted to the coming generations; we are getting ready for them. How can we be getting ready for guests who have not arrived? That is what you do in your house every time you have a few friends to visit you; you began yesterday to get ready for to-night, and you made all the house restless and unhappy because they did not all seem to share your anxiety and to be in an equal hurry-scurry with yourself. What were you doing? Preparing for the coming. Precisely. The coming may be denominated as posterity, those who have yet to be born. Why do you keep that piece of jewellery or that beautifully carven watch? why take so much care of it? I mean this to be my son's. You are preparing for posterity; posterity is teaching you a little thrift, and saying something to you about the genius of wise anticipation. It is for posterity we write our books; it is never for the immediate day; if there is any real and true writing in the books, all that is deepest and most solid and most enduring is meant to be read by posterity. Curious beyond credibility is the fact that the next century will have to interpret this. We say that such and such questions must be left for the historian. But the historian is not yet born. But he will be born, and he will read all our records, and tell the men who lived two hundred years ago what they meant when they said such and such words. There is a day of judgment, and it comes in literature and in statesmanship and in broad civilisation and in religion, and there is a dividing time when we will know which belongs to the right and which to the left.

Over all the generations a kind sweet Providence presides. God is doing a great knitting work. You sit beside the young knitter or the old, and you, being a man, cannot understand all about looping and counting and coming over again and doing things that seem to have no meaning in them; but all the while something, perhaps picturesque or beautiful, certainly useful, may be the issue of the whole. And God is the great knitter; He is looping the generations and

arranging them; He hath a purpose in all that He does; His purpose is love, care, redemption, sanctification; and the whole process is beautiful, yet grim; glorious, yet tragic as a vesture rolled in blood.

I close the sermon at this point because I want you to engage with me in special prayer seeing we shall not meet again on Thursday mornings until the first Thursday in October. Now that we are to be separated one from another I am thankful that we have always our printed medium of communication. A New Zealander can have all the service over again; and in the backwoods of Canada, where the City Temple Pulpit has its friends, they can sing all the hymns and read all the lessons and the sermon and the prayer. I see in this arrangement a marvellous parable of unity and sympathy and co-operative prayer. I am thankful to God that I see this audience before me to-day. To have seen all this sight for thirty-one years without any sign of diminution of interest—yea, rather, with signs of growing interest—is a fact which prostrates me before the living God in utterest humility and raises me up again, in loudest, sweetest hymns of praise. I am able now to tell the people amongst whom I shall sojourn for a time that of my own experience I can testify from this Thursday morning service that the people do love the simple Gospel, and think there is nothing to be compared with it.

Prayer.

THE Lord be with us when we are separated the one from the other. Go with those who go, and open gates which they cannot themselves open; give them favour in the sight of the people, and return them in due time to home and duty. Abide with those too poor to go, who long to see the ocean and the green fields in their greenest beauty, but are doomed to stay in other places. Theirs is a hard lot. Thou canst make much up to them, and Thou canst so incline our hearts as to do much for them. May we meet again in October, in the autumn, when the leaves are beginning to fall. God grant it!

May grace, mercy, peace, abide with us all for ever. Amen.

[*Sunday Morning, July 29th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, how poor are we ! how great art Thou ! We have heard of Thee in the reading of Thy Word as a great and terrible God ; and, again, we have heard of Thee, that God is love ; and, again, that our God is a consuming fire. And yet there lived One who folded our hands in prayer and bade us look up and say, Our Father, which art in heaven. Truly we cannot understand this, it is confusion to our poor mind, and our reason in its proudest moment staggers and withdraws. Yet we feel the mystery of it all, and the tender grace, and we can almost see the dewdrop on the eyelids of the fierce lightning. It is so strange, so much beyond us, we feel so small when Thou dost shake the heavens and the earth. Then there comes a period of blue sky and soft breezes and tender whispers, and the flowers take back all their confidence in God, and look up as if in praise. This is the way, and it is beyond us. Oh ! that we might know how poor we are, how abject, how helpless, and that we might cease our boasting when Thou art listening. We are so great amongst ourselves, but when Thou dost look upon us we tremble and we are dumb. Thou couldst by one of Thy lightning strokes dissolve the universe. How we tremble and are weak, and are sore afraid ; for these things are beyond us, and we are still because Thou didst it. May we remember the great storm, and cease our prating before God ; may we remember the lightning that nearly dissolved the whole creation, and then betake ourselves to prayer and praise and holy expectancy of love. How small, how momentary are we, with all our greatness and loudness and show ! Vanity of vanities, saith the wise man, behold all is vanity, compared with the Most High, who is the rock of our salvation and the sun of our hope. We come into Thine house, even the house which hands have built and which sometimes Thou dost strike through as with a rod of fire : for what can stand before God when He ariseth terribly to judge the earth ? Subdue all these great men, these stupendous follies, these swollen impertinences ; and may we be quiet and simple and child-hearted ; if we cower at all may it be in a godly fear before the mysterious Cross of redemption. Thou wilt conduct our life according to Thine own law ; may we fall with consent and gratitude into the way of the Lord, be it long, be it short, so that the way end in heaven. If Thou hast imposed upon some of us the duty of showing religion in

the form of uncomplaining affliction, may we take up the Cross as if it were an adornment. If Thou hast given to others of us to show how we can be strong and prosperous, and yet simple and pure and tender, the Lord enable us to accept the responsibility and to discharge it. The Lord look upon Job cursing the day of his birth, and upon Jeremiah remembering the gall and the wormwood of earlier days, and upon all the souls that know the mystery of a torturing process. Thou knowest how much we can bear, and Thou canst lay it nearly all upon us, yet Thou dost keep us from reeling and falling as men fall who stagger under a great burden. If we remember our sins it is that we may the more vividly remember Thy grace, for where sin abounds grace doth much more abound. We remember the gall and the bitterness and the great sorrow and the staggering blow, and even therefore, as Thy sweet prophet said, because of this very memory of sadness we have hope. Amen.

C.

THE REASON OF HOPE.

" . . . therefore have I hope."—LAM. iii. 21.



E should inquire into this "therefore." It ought to be to us like a great gate of entrance into a king's house. If the logic fails here it fails everywhere. We must keep our eye upon the therefores of divine and human reasoning and providence. There is no chapter in all the world, except one, to be compared with the chapter out of which the text is taken. What is that other chapter—in the same tone, written in the lightlessness of the same gloom? It is the third chapter of the Book of Job. These two third chapters might well be read the one after the other. "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a manchild conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it"; and away goes the black curse like a black river flowing through these wondrous Bible pages. I cannot stand by and rebuke

Job. He meant it all; he never invented this threnody; it poured out of his poor withered heart, and cursing was the only possible praying. We must note the time of things; we must not set up the standard at the wrong place; nor must we judge the evening by the morning nor the morning by the evening. There is a manhood of infancy, and a manhood of youth, and a manhood of old age: each period has its own manhood, its own bible, its own vision, its own song or groan.

This third chapter of Lamentations opens well. "I am the man that hath seen affliction." That is the man we want to hear talk; we do not want any foamy babble; we cannot now do with any piled or inflammatory rhetoric. There comes a time in life when affliction must speak to us, when experience must say, Come, poor troubled child, and I will tell thee the meaning of it all; I have seen it, and God has given me the key to the enigma; let us find some quiet corner and talk it all over, and perhaps we may conclude with a loud and sweet doxology. How strange is this wonderful talk! and yet after it we are expected to believe in a special and most tender Providence. "He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. Surely against me is He turned; He turneth His hand against me all the day," so that I cannot catch sight of the gleaming of His loving face, which indeed I have seen so little that I have, for the moment at least, forgotten it. "My flesh and my skin hath He made old;" it used to be soft and tender, so soft and tender that friends took note of it, and said there was not one wrinkle ploughed in my smooth brow; but now "He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travail. He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out; He hath made my chain heavy." It is heavier in the morning than it was at night; I mentally weighed it; at night it was so much, and when I awake in the morning it is as if some cruel one had been in my cell at night and had doubled the weight of my chain. "Also when I cry and shout He shutteth out my prayer"—draws down some great iron shutter which my poor crying cannot

penetrate. "He was unto me as a bear lying in wait and as a lion in secret places. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: He hath made me desolate." And people say that I should praise Him! so easy is it for one man to carry another man's black bitter misery. "He hath bent His bow and set me as a mark for the arrow." I was the pity of some people and the derision of others, and I was their song all the day. "He hath filled me with bitterness, He hath made me drunken with wormwood." And yet I am told I should be cheerful, and pray, and look up, and be happy, and be expectant; how can I pray when the Lord hath broken my teeth with gravel stones and covered me with ashes? Can the grave praise His majesty? And so long has He removed my peace and my joy that I have forgotten prosperity. It used to be a figure in my life, a great radiant figure; men said, Here is Prosperity, here is the shining of an invisible and supernatural presence, glowing through the very skin and making the tabernacle of the body as a house of lamps; but it is so long since, that I have forgotten prosperity; I have companied so long with grief that I have forgotten that there is any shining face. And my soul has been removed from peace; strength and hope I have none. But, "remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope."

It is as if insanity suddenly emerged into sobriety, self-control, and a true spiritual realisation of the meaning and purpose of things. The very memory of the gall and the wormwood makes me hope; I have had so much of them that there cannot be any more to have; it has been so terrible that now surely it is going to be summertime and joy. This man handles life well. He is a true poet; he sees somewhat of the measure of things, and knows that at a certain time the dawn cannot be far off. I tell you I will number the hours and give you a forecast. I have been here in this prison of gloom and doubt and desolateness one hour, two hours, three hours, all the winter, all the summer, all the winter again; it must

now be not far from morning. He reasons and calculates by the right chronometer; he does not say to some poor paid timekeeper, What hour is it now? He counts his tears, and says, The shower is nearly over; God will not distress me above that I am able to bear; I look at the pool of bitter hot tears I have shed, and I say, Surely there are no more tears to flow, and I know by this sign that holy laughter is coming and sweet company and merriment in which there is no folly: my life is not governed by some man-made clock, but by some wondrous movement of the divine providence, which says, Now, poor smitten one, lightning-blasted one, thou shalt have rest; because thou hast suffered so much and so long, for that very reason have hope. That is not the reasoning I have been accustomed to; it needs a prophet to instruct me in these holy mysteries; I should have reasoned otherwise, saying, God means to make an end of me; the evening is hastening to the midnight, and the midnight will be sevenfold in darkness; and I, who began like a little child singing at its mother's knee, will end like an old crushed clod out of which not a grassblade may be expected to spring. We need those great prophetic voices. Sometimes we need the very biggest soul that ever lived, and we seem to need him every whit—all his brains, all his heart, all his music. He is not too much for us because our grief is so deep and so sensitive, and the whole outlook is a horizon of blackness, and darkness has no history and no measuring points.

This is where the religious element enters into life with great copiousness, and where it should be received with unutterable welcomes. This is not as if one human being were addressing another; the words certainly come through a human medium, but they bring a divine meaning with them. Words have an atmosphere. It is the atmosphere that is, as we say, supernatural, divine, transcendent. Anybody could read the third chapter of Job or the third chapter of the Lamentations of Jeremiah to us word for word, and yet such poor sapless reading, unpunctuated by sob or tear, might never reach our mourning souls. What a mistake it is to think that anybody can read!

what a horrible mistake it is to suppose that all voices are alike! How wise and rich is he who feels the atmosphere of an expression, that peculiar afflatus and mysterious influence that cannot be transferred to paper or represented in cold type; that long-dying cadence, that sound of remoteness which may be the true nearness; this can only be realised by positive, personal experience. Yet herein it is that the old prophets live for ever, and that the Sermon on the Mount has made every hill a pulpit, and every valley a church.

The vital point in the text is the word "therefore;" and it comes upon us suddenly, unexpectedly, it is as a flaming bush at the foot of the mountain, the mountain all grim barrenness. I wonder if there are any analogies that may help us in the explanation of the meaning and the application of the purpose of this mysterious "therefore." Seed grows. Well, what of it? If it does grow, what then? Everything. As what? As the resurrection; that is answer enough to your mean inquiry. If a little seed can grow, why may not the planted bulb of the body grow? Thou sowest not the body that shall be, and yet a body in some real, strong, clear, and satisfactory sense. Thou sowest not that which thou wilt materially reap; that which went out of the hand of the seedsman or sower is not that which will come into the hand of the reaper, yet there shall be a strangeness of identity, an eternal reminding of something that was, a going-back through ages, and we shall dwell in the ineffable past and turn it into the throbbing and immediate present. But some man will say, How? Take no heed of that "some man." There are men who spoli heaven by their sceptical and vexatious How? That "some man," as the apostle calls him, giving him the benefit of anonymousness rather than the dishonour of oblivion, still haunts the human mind with his How? As if he could understand anything, even the lifting of his own arm,—he who in yesterday's lightning fled into some concealing cellar. He impertinently says, in face of the predicted resurrection, How will the dead be raised up? O, universe, halt, call thy suns and moons to stand still, to answer this fool's How? When we come to question-asking we

had better fall to praying. Do not mistake impertinence for inquiry; and do not suppose that the whole universe, with all its constellations, will say to itself, Hush! here is some poor dark stumbling soul that wants to understand *how*. There will be no answer given to him until time, with all its evolution and declaration of answers to enigmas and mysteries, shall work out its purpose, and the man shall be answered by a great vision.

“Therefore.” I have never seen the stars except in the darkness, therefore the night may have something to show me as well as the day—the night of loneliness and desolation and bitter sorrow. There may be a star on purpose; one star in all the uncounted millions of stellar points was marked out as His star—as if the jewels starry were already appropriated and labelled, as if for personal acceptance and enjoyment. When the lightning shone upon us some eight-and-forty hours ago not a star was to be seen; we saw what looked to us to be the Light of light, light refined, and it was a time in which to be silent; it was, as it were, as if one stroke more, and the little handful of dust called the universe would be scattered and forgotten. Yet man, poor but well-dressed man, looks over his little wall, the top of which is protected by glass, well cemented, and he pipes out of his narrow throat the assurance that he is getting more control over the laws of nature. I do not know that any man looks so nearly what he really is as in a great thunderstorm. But as I have seen stars in darkness, therefore I may see God’s starry glory in the darkness of a bitter experience; texts will come to me with new meanings, forgotten things will revive and gladden the memory, many objects that before were dull and unresponsive will become radiant and all but tuneful and eloquent, speaking to misery just the gospel that the soul needs.

Intellect grows, therefore character may grow. The little may become great, the weak may become strong, that which is far off may be brought nigh, and that which is barren may be fruitful. We know that intellect grows; we have seen it in the little child, we have almost seen the new idea enter the opening

brain: it is as if we saw a beautiful little bird fly into a bush in the summer time and reappear, so to say, though not literally, not as a bird, but as a song. Who can tell when the ideas came to fruition in the human brain? Who can fix the date when the little boy became almost a philosopher? Who can say at what hour the meaning of certain words was revealed to any one of us? If this process of mental expansion can go forward with such happy results, so the human soul, when it is known under the name of character, nobleness, self-control, love of God, may grow, and no man can say just when or just where. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the the Spirit." Regeneration is one of the fundamental and essential mysteries. Yet the reasoning is given; because the intellect may grow, and does grow, the soul may grow in wisdom, in gentleness, in beauty and in godlikeness. Moreover this is just how the elder men did reason. Thou canst not, my sweet stripling, go forth to meet this great giant of Gath; on what pretence canst thou go? it would be cruelty on my part, as the king, to let thee go; it is brave and sweet of thee, but better crush or quench that strange dream. Nay, said the youth, I kept my father's sheep in the wilderness, and there came a lion, and there came a bear, and they took of the flock; and I rose, and I slew the lion and the bear, and He who delivered me out of the mouth of the one and out of the mouth of the other, He will deliver this uncircumcised Philistine into my hands. That is making a right use of the past. Yesterday's providence should be to-day's prophecy, hope, and poem of assurance. And, said one who wrote that bitter chapter against the day of his birth, He hath been with me in six troubles and in seven He will not forsake me. Who can draw a line at six and say the Deity ends here, or here Providence finally stops? No one. I will take the whole six as meaning the culminating seven. God Himself is an odd number; He is One or He is Three: and He will deliver me out of the odd number of my affliction and sorrow. Seven shall not frighten the Trinity.

This is how Jesus Christ would have us live, in the spirit of hope. He would have us ignore our afflictions, He would have us realise them and understand somewhat of their meaning and accept them in the right spirit and say that the time will come when your tribulations shall be part of your glory, the time will come when Jesus Christ will give us the blossom of joy out of the root of misery. That is our hope. It is a hope characteristic of the Christian revelation, a distinct jewel; it is the meaning of the Cross. Therefore, poor broken-down soul, because of thy very misery, take hope, and thus turn all that seems to be against thee into a hymn of delight and expectancy.

I read in the newspapers yesterday something which I cannot believe. I refer to a speech reported to have been delivered by the German Emperor. Surely it is a faulty translation. We ought not to come to a decided judgment upon the speech till the very words of the speaker are before us. The German Emperor invoked the name of God, and spoke, as it were, in the name of Christ and His religion; and yet in the midst of his speech he said, speaking of the Chinese, "Give no quarter, take no prisoners; so use your weapons that no Chinaman for a thousand years will dare to beard a German." Do we know the meaning of these words? "Give no quarter," though the cry be bitter and piercing; "take no prisoners," do not burden yourselves with the Chinese, kill them, exterminate them, that no Chinaman may for a thousand years look askance at a German. I do not halt in my ministry to make any remarks upon the merely military part of the programme, but when that programme is associated with the name of God and with the name of Jesus Christ, I do long to send word to the Chinese that the spirit of the Gospel is, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves; pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." I think it an infinite pity that any pagan nation, as we might call it, should get the impression that Christians, under the direct sanction of their Master, are commissioned, more than authorised, simply commanded, to crush their enemies and give no quarter

to those who cry for mercy. The morals of militarism I do not undertake to criticise, but I cannot allow the Lord's great, sweet name to be profaned without making at least a feeble personal protest.

SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 29TH, 1900.

Anthem 32 .. "The Lord is my strength" *Monk*
The Lord's Prayer.—*Field*.

Hymn 14 .. "Give to our God immortal praise."

1st Lesson. Deut. x. 17-21.

17. For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward. [*Were ever so many stars gathered into one crown?*]

Chant 94 Psalm cxviii. *Henley*

2nd Lesson. Luke iv. 5-8.

5. And the devil, taking Him up into an high mountain, shewed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time [*What greatness! what littleness! "All the kingdoms"—a moment of time.*]

6. And the devil said unto Him, All this power will I give Thee and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

7. If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be Thine [*"All the kingdoms of the world"—all the empires in a dewdrop.*]

8. And Jesus [*knowing all values and relations and issues*] answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan [*and take thy worlds with thee. We may pay too high a price for empire and show and gilt*]: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve [*and He cannot be seen any moment of time*].

Anthem .. "O praise God in His holiness" *Clarke-Whitfeld*
SOLO: Mr. EDGAR ARCHER.

Prayer.

Hymn .. "Holy Father, in Thy mercy." ..

Sermon.

Offertory and Quartette:

"God is a Spirit" (*Woman of Samaria*) *Bennett*

Hymn 271 (2nd Tune) "My faith looks up to Thee."

Benediction and Threefold Amen.—*Gounod*.

May grace, mercy, peace, abide with us and with us all till ends life's transient dream. Amen.

[*Sunday Evening, July 29th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

BECAUSE Thou knowest what our hearts most need we will leave ourselves, heavenly Father, in Thy redeeming and gracious hands. Thou not only hearest prayer, Thou readest it on the tablets of the heart ; Thou knowest what we would say in our prayer if we could say it ; Thou knowest how deep our confession would be, how utterly we should cleanse our breasts of all foul things and all pestilent memories. But Thou canst read our story, Thou knowest the trouble of the heart, Thou canst see every stain in the life ; all we can do, therefore, is to say, at the Cross and in the name of the Son of God, Be merciful unto us, Thou God of love. Thou knowest our frame, Thou rememberest that we are dust ; Thou dost not miscalculate the work of Thine own hands, Thou knowest how much succour we need every day, Thou knowest that we may not be safely left one moment to ourselves. So we have heard of Thy being present everywhere and all the time, and we have been taught to believe that Thou art a God nigh at hand and not afar off, that Thou art within whisper-reach of the soul, and that a sigh is heard in the courts above. We all need Thy blessing, the comfort of Christ, in the Father and the Son and in the Holy Ghost ; the great comfort, the infinite consolation ; we feel that we need all the sunshine that Thou hast given. Thou hast not withheld from us any good thing ; this we will say ; and if Thou hast deprived us and made us poor again and again, and sent upon the whole land a wind of desolateness and loneliness, Thou wilt explain it by-and-bye. The Cross is the pledge of the final explanation. Thou who didst not withhold Thine only begotten Son wilt not withhold what explanation our poor desolated hearts require when we are sheltered within Thine own eternity. This is our joy, and in this confidence we would shout aloud. Amen.

CI.

VALEDICTION AND BENEDICTION.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."—2 COR. xiii. 14.



HIS is our closing service for this pulpit year. We do not meet again until September the ninth, when I break my holiday in order to preach in this church on a special and interesting occasion. Until the first week in October I shall have no Thursday morning service. In view of these facts, which to me are most pensive in all their suggestion, I want to say, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." This is valediction and benediction, a farewell and a blessing; not an official benediction pronounced because the time has come that it should in canonical order be pronounced, but a friendly, pastoral, loving, grateful benediction, every word having its full meaning expressed, every tone intended for the most inward places of the heart. What poet could help me to a fuller and sweeter text? what invention of man could put love, the particular, long-continued love which exists and subsists between you and me, into finer radiance, into more expressive colour?

The repetition of the text is the best sermon. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." What then? Then there will be no real separation. The true union is mystical, spiritual, divine. We come to learn this by attending a costly and distressing school; we come to know this by experience. Disappearance does not violate union; not being able to see does not utterly impoverish the soul; there is an inward sight, there is a spiritual vision, there is a wondrous power of sympathy which can realise or put into body-forms all that is most

sacred and healthful in human evolution. Once we thought that not to be seen by the eye of the body was indeed to be cut off for ever from the personality which gave every other personality its accent and its value: When I was a child I thought as a child, I spake as a child, but now that I have become a man, scourged and thonged by the invisible whip, utterly cast down and mocked of heaven, I begin to see that sight is a faculty of the soul, and that communion is a wondrous mystery of the heart. You cannot learn this by letters; this is not a subject on which the teacher can dwell; you must approach this great thought and realise this ineffable comfort by a crown of thorns, pierced hands and feet, and after the spear-cut in the quivering side; then if God be gracious to the soul it will become young with a new vision and see what the telescope has never discerned. The air is full of figures, shapely, beauteous, radiant figures, draped with light. What is so of the nature of the infinite as light? Into what shapes and colours it can be thrown; how much it can be made to say! The Alps come into the blue sky of summer every day; the Oberland is there, such as the Oberland itself knows nothing about, so infinite in range, in colour, in depth, in mountain, in valley, and in all the mystery of expressiveness. Yet few men have ever seen the sky. You cannot see the sky by looking straight before you; the sky is not there; the sky you may see when you do nothing but look at it. The vision of the sky is not something that comes in like an odd-and-end now and again casually here and there; it is a vision by itself, and it is open to the poorest child, open to the meanest observer. All nature seems to want to say, and in very deed it does say often with a large measure of emphasis and clearness, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." Sometimes you know when a friend wants to speak and yet hesitates, hardly knowing how to put the thought that is in his heart; he opens his lips, there comes a gleam into his eye, he makes some sort of sign that he would like to say something, but is hardly able to say it in your present condition of feeling. It is so with kind motherly nature; she wants to talk to me, but she

sees that I am not in a listening mood, and she will never talk to frivolity; she must have wise listeners. He that hath ears to hear alone can hear that mystic music of the voice of nature. And sometimes we seem to be quite ready to hear, and then she says quite broadly audible right away above the voices of the birds, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you," wherever you are, whatever you are doing, whatever you are suffering; may the whole Deity be with you, may the sun shine upon you as if you were the only creature in the universe to be illumined and blessed with light.

What a wondrous argument is this benediction! It is a large theology; there is in this benediction a Trinity, a relation of persons, distinct and operative personalities, each member of the Trinity having something to do with the human soul. You cannot build your rhetoric without the Trinity; the poor sweltering rhetorician must have his three members in order to complete what he calls a climax—which nobody wants to hear. You cannot anywhere fail to see the threefold action, the threefold mystery of being, co-operation, and of development. Whatever may be the metaphysics of the Trinity, I know not, I cannot enter into that ineffable mystery; but I see a ladder rising from earth to heaven, and I see the angels of God descending and ascending, ascending and descending, holding continual and vital commerce with the uttermost parts of the great heaven. So it is with this Trinity; I meet it everywhere. It is not a question of grammar, nor is it a question to be discussed by my little half-educated reason, hardly awake yet to the facts and the realities of things; but it is a mystic figure, three in one, one in three, breaking out multifoldly, and then gathering itself up again into a wondrous intensity of personality. There it is, as much in nature as in theology; as much in every soul as in the great mystic unit of Godhead. If this be so we shall see something of the real position of Jesus Christ in His own church and in His own universe. Let us read again, confining the reading to the first member of the text:—"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." Who is the Lord Jesus Christ? how has He

come into possession of this word "Lord"? He was not born with it, it is not on the birth registers of old time. "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save." Where is the "Lord"? This "Lord" must have come as a title and as a character by an evolution which we have missed. He was Lord in eternity; He did not come to us in all the glory of lordship or dominion; He came to a cradle, to a chair, to a mountain, to a Cross, to a cloud. "The cloud received Him out of their sight." But what right has He to be in this benediction? Read the benediction again: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost." But if Jesus Christ was only a most beautiful and fascinating example, what business has He to be named with the Deity? Shall we say, The grace of the carpenter of Nazareth, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost? Taste is shocked, reason is appalled, the sense of the fitness of things, the true inward proportion of poetry is utterly offended and annoyed. The blessing of a man and of God the Holy Spirit be with you—a man, a crucified despised man, spat upon and buffeted and thrown out of the creation of God so far as malevolence could do it; yet He here; grammatically, syntactically, He is associated with the Deity; what right has He to be there if He was only a man, a sweet young man, a beauteous Nazarene flower, the delight of His mother? What right has He to be in this association, and not only to be in it, but to be in it on a strict basis of equality? There is no reservation, there is no parenthesis in the statement; the whole benediction reads straight on, so that whatever is due to the one personality is due to the other and due to all. This is an argument, this is a theology, and nothing can get over it. For a mere man to have his name associated on equal terms with the Deity is an impossibility in literature, an offence in æsthetics, an anti-climax in eloquence. Give the Lord Jesus His titles; regard Him as proceeding forth and coming from God; regard Him as showing the fulness of the Godhead bodily; look upon Him as a being pre-existent who had glory with the Father before the world was, and who was present with the Creator when He set up the fountains of water and built the

skies and made the house which we call nature or the universe. Then there can be no dispute as to His legal right, if we may so put it, to be upon this list of names, and to be the first upon this wondrous mystic list. The Lord Jesus Christ is not named last; that would indeed have made no matter, because to be in the list at all is to be Divine. But, notably and instructively, Jesus Christ is named first. That is one of His names—First, Last, the Beginning and the Ending, which is but another beginning.

With what a wondrous instinct is the right word chosen by this speaker of the benediction! No poet can amend the phrase. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"—the favour, the pity, the daily care, the incessant solicitousness and love. "The grace," a word fit for the Cross, a word that is as the jewel syllable in the great literature crowded into the one pregnant word Atonement.

How stands the case, then? Let us hear it again. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God"—which is but another expression for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. See how the personalities belong to one another. "God so loved the world"—may that love be with you, Corinthians, Englishmen, Americans, humanity the world over; that love that redeemed every man be with every man to redeem him every day.

How, then, does the benediction proceed? "And the communion of the Holy Ghost." What fit words; what expert writing! If it were only a matter of the choice of words here is an instance of the finest bringing-together of the most exquisite terms; in a sense, the only terms that could fit the occasion. The Holy Spirit communes with the heart, speaks to it without words, hovers over it, breathes upon it, turns over the leaves when we read the words of Christ and annotates them with light. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of companionship, filling all space, yet occupying no room; a contradiction in words, a verity and a music in experience. What a leap, or what a growth, from the old, old days when the murderers laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man

called Saul. Who can measure the distance between that young man and this hoary apostle? Who could see the benediction following the consenting to a cruel murder? See what Saul was at the beginning, see what he is at the end, and explain the advance or the transformation, a metamorphosis unknown to dreaming poet, and explain how it was brought about. No man could write this benediction without having first received it. We may follow the apostle Paul through all his epistles with his own words, saying, "This also I deliver unto you, that which I received." He never pretended to originality; he was always a message-carrier; he never made his own discourses, he stood up and waited for them. In this way, working hard, thinking much, caring but little for mechanics and forms, he was ready to receive and then to deliver what God pleased. So when he called the Corinthians together he said, "I delivered unto you that which I also received"; and after every sentence of the apostle Paul we might read these explanatory, these limiting, and yet these ennobling terms. You cannot bless unless you have been blessed. Hypocrisy cannot pronounce a benediction; the words can be pronounced, but not the benediction itself in its innermost music and holy meaning. Only sincerity can produce the true music of the true heart.

"I will not leave you comfortless." "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." I will change the text in one word. I have never throughout my long ministry been able to pronounce this benediction exactly as it is written. The change which I make is, I think, an amendment. "Be with *us* all." The minister has no right to stand apart as if he were dropping something upon others in an official and authoritative manner. I sit or stand with the smallest little child that God ever sent into the world; and I do not in pronouncing a benediction say, "The benediction of God be with you," I say, "Be with *us*"—the little child, the poor cripple, the desolate soul—brother of the heart. We want a common blessing as we want a common atmosphere. Let us comfort one another with these

words. I daily need your benediction, and I daily get it. I have grown upon it and worked upon it, and if I had not been sensible of your benediction I could not have been standing here for one and thirty years. What hath God wrought! and what is the explanation of it all? "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost." This is a divine miracle; this is not some little wonder blown like a bubble on the air, but a wondrous development of God's own presence, visible not to the eye, but to the heart. For in very deed He has been amongst us, and we are here without a flaw in our friendship, without a bruise upon our confidence, without a suspicion in our intercourse. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with us all."

SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 30TH, 1900.

(See page 126.)

Voluntary	...	...	...	"Andante"	...	...	...	<i>Guilmant</i>
Anthem 9	...	...	...	"The heavens proclaim Him"	...	...	...	<i>Beethoven</i>
The Lord's Prayer.— <i>Field.</i>								
Hymn 1	...	...	...	"O worship the King"				

1st Lesson. I Chron. xvi. 23-27.

23. Sing unto the Lord, all the earth [*there is nothing parochial or limited in that invitation*]; shew forth from day to day His salvation [*all the earth*].

24. Declare His glory among the heathen; His marvellous works among all nations. [*Hold high the glowing lamp.*]

25. For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised [*swell upon swell of music*]; He also is to be feared above all gods.

26. For all the gods of the people are idols [*pasteboard things*]; but the Lord made the heavens.

27. Glory and honour are in His presence; strength and gladness are in His place. [*Let us hasten to Him!*]

Chant 94	...	...	...	Psalms cxviii.	...	...	...	...	<i>Henley</i>
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2nd Lesson. John iv. 23, 24.

23. But the hour cometh, and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.

24. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. [*Here, or there; on the hill-top, at the grave-side.*]

Prayer.

Hymn 74	...	...	...	"Come, let us join our cheerful songs."				
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Sermon.

ORDER OF SERVICE.

SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 29TH, 1900.

Voluntary "Melody" *West*

General Confession.

Almighty and most merciful Father; We have erred, and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against Thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us. But Thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare Thou them, O God, which confess their faults. Restore Thou them that are penitent; According to Thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for His sake; That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, To the glory of Thy holy Name. Amen.

Invocation.

Descend from heaven, immortal Dove,
Stoop down and take us on Thy wings,
And mount and bear us far above
The reach of all inferior things!

Hymn 524.. "Pleasant are Thy courts above."

(1st Tune)

Scripture Lesson. Heb. xiii. 20-21.

Anthem "Hearken unto Me" *Sullivan*

Hearken unto Me, My people, and give ear unto Me, O My nation, for a law shall proceed from Me, and I will make My judgment to rest for a light of the people. My righteousness is near, My salvation is gone forth, and Mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon Me, and on Mine arm shall they trust. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth; beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but My salvation shall be for ever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished.—ISAIAH li 4, 5, 6.

Prayer.

Hymn 688 .. "The radiant morn hath passed away."

(1st Tune)

Sermon

Offertory and Duet.

"Evening Prayer" *H. W. Little*

Misses STANLEY LUCAS and LUCIE JOHNSTONE.

Hymn 698 .. "O Light of life, O Saviour dear."

(1st Tune)

Benediction.

Cornet Solo.. .. "Les Rameaux" *Faure*

Mr. GEORGE HARLOW.

[*Sunday Morning, September 9th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, unto Thee shall all flesh come. We represent a great hunger and an unquenchable thirst: except we come to the Bread of life and to the river which flows from Thy throne neither our hunger nor our thirst can be satisfied. We thought we could do without Thee, and lo, the loneliness that crept over our hearts became a great pain; so we returned and said, We will seek the Father's house, where there is bread enough and to spare, and where the river of God is known to be full of water. We come to the house of God for edification, we desire to be built up in our most holy faith; our supreme desire is to be strengthened, stablished; to feel assurance upon assurance that we are on the Rock, and that being on the Rock we can never be overthrown or displaced. We have looked in upon the devil's feast, and lo, the reek thereof is poison and the smell of it is as the smell of death. So we come to the house of bread, to the crystal house, where the truth is spoken, and where the heart can be honest to itself under the scrutiny of God. We thank Thee for aught and everything that has helped us in our lower nature, in our bodily structure, in all the weariness and fatigue and stress of life; but we thank Thee most of all for edification, for bread, for strength, for that tender, subtle comfort which throws its arms around the soul and makes us strong with the strength of God. It is a poor world and utterly mean; the more we know of it the more we are disappointed; there are more thorns than roses; yet, if we take hold of the world in Thy name and look at in the vision of Thy grace, lo, it is a beautiful world, it is as a pearl that has dropped from a necklace high above this mean level. May we use the world as not abusing it, may we sit lightly upon it, may we hold it with a light hand; may we have no property here we cannot give up at Thy bidding; our freehold is in the eternities. Wilt Thou make us glad in Thine house; may we hear voices we can understand, that the heart can understand, though we may not be able to understand all the words; may we sing with the spirit and sing with the understanding, may we know the music of sympathy as well as the music of letters; thus shall the poor man be lifted into wealth and the feeble man into conscious strength, and on the poorest, dullest mind there shall steal the welcome sense that there is something in God's house that cannot be found elsewhere. Thus may we all be enlightened and edified, comforted and built up, and stablished and made mightily strong. We bless Thee that we need all that Thy house can give us; it is full of fatness; Thy house is a song; may

we hear it, take part in it, and rejoice in it with exceeding joy. Some are here who are very weary, and they wonder when the fatigue will all be gone; some are very rich and strong, and sometimes they think they do not need Thee, invisible, ineffable, mysterious God; but Thou wilt bring them to the dust and into the darkness, and they will whine for Thee, and that will be the best prayer they can then in their loneliness offer in the darkness. Oh spare them! We do not pray for them to be taken back through this awful valley of gloom, but if there is no other way, then let that way be through the appalling loss and darkness. And some are here whose hearts are sore; some can hardly tell why the soreness is so keen, yet they feel it, yet they cry out for the living God. Regard all who are strangers within our gates, here for the moment, a look, a swift glance, a flash that dies, and then we shall see one another no more. May we all hear the voice of God and have some understanding of its gospel meaning, its redeeming music, its great comfort.

All this we say at the Cross. We could not say it elsewhere; elsewhere there is no prayer that is Christian. Our prayers are offered on Calvary, at the Cross, through the Cross, the Cross of Christ. Amen.

CII.

OUTSIDERS.

"If . . . there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers."—I Cor. xiv. 23.



THE Corinthians had got the notion that they could speak tongues; they made great noises, and thought those noises were music. The Apostle Paul reasoned with them in a right healthy and manly way.

He said in effect: I give no deliverance upon this matter that is at all definite and authoritative; to speak with tongues is perhaps good. I would that we all spake with tongues, but I prefer that instead of speaking with tongues we should prophesy, teach, explain, and get into the doctrinal and ethical meaning of things; now if I were to come to you speaking with tongues, what should I profit you, except I speak to you either by revelation or by knowledge or by prophesying or by doctrine? What good could I possibly do you if you do not understand something at least of what I say? Do you see? If the trumpet

has two totally different voices, what in the name of reason can be made of its blast? If the trumpet should hesitate and tremble and say in effect, I really did not know what note I ought to express, then how can those who are relying upon it for instruction as to the battle know how to answer? Now there are many kinds of voices in the world, and probably not one of them is without signification, but I do not profess to know what that signification is; and if I do not know the meaning of the word, I should be as a barbarian to him that speaketh. Nor does the case lie all on one side, for he that speaketh in an unknown and bewildering tongue shall be a barbarian to me. What is the good? What is the use? Now I am not forbidding speaking in tongues, I am only pointing out some of the dangers and some of the mischievous possibilities; I want you to think about this whole thing from beginning to end; above all things, be men of sense and sound judgment, and examine what I now say when I declare that, except you have some understanding of what you are talking about, how can you profit one another?

What a master teacher! What a sensible man was Paul! You need never go outside the Bible for common sense. The case is well put by the apostle in these words: You have all come into one place; so far, so good; now if there shall come into your assembly an unlearned man, what would he make of it if you were all talking in Babel-like fashion, even the speakers themselves not knowing the meaning of their own words? The ploughman comes in, and says, There is something here which rather upsets and baffles me; I do not know what these people are talking about, and they do not seem to know very well themselves what they are talking about. You must consider the unlearned. That is a new view of the Church. Why, the Church has lived these many centuries to spit upon the unlearned, to ignore the unlearned, to set the unlearned in the gallery, and tell the preacher who preaches to the unlearned that he is playing to the gallery. Oh the blasphemy! I charge the Church of God with having made its preaching a profession; not a cry to the unlearned, the sad, the uninstructed, the weary, but

having twisted itself into some comical thing which calls itself culture and learning, and ignored the poor man who does not know words of five syllables.

Then the apostle varies the case, and says, And if there shall come an unbeliever into the Church, where you are all talking this way and that way and some other way and no way at all, that has any real meaning in it, what is the unbeliever to make of your confusion? We have to consider the unbeliever. If it is a church, if it is the Church, if it is the universal Church of Christ, we have to make room for the unlearned and for the unbeliever. What will the unbeliever think of this? Not what will his opinion be of us only, but what will his judgment be of the doctrine? He will say, All this is noise, confusion, without point or accent or expressive colour; I will have nothing to do with this; life is too short for me to attempt to enter into such small mysteries. So we come upon a great Pauline policy.

What was the policy of the great-hearted apostle? It was that everybody should at some point or other be able to come into the service of the Gospel, the worship of God, and should in some degree at least find the supreme blessing. There is a lesson to you, church leaders, preachers, and persons concerned as you suppose yourselves to be in the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. In the degree in which you are so concerned heaven's blessing cannot be withheld from you; but let us take care lest we become mere botanists or geologists or astronomers, lest we cultivate some favourite science of things, and lest, above all, we raise ourselves up and say, This place was not made for the unlearned; as for the unbelievers, turn them out. We must not do so. And the greatest man will be the first to say that in the Church of Christ there ought always to be at least one mouthful of bread for the very poorest soul that has crept into the Father's house. I am not afraid of the great man; he will know when I am preaching to others than himself, he will know when I come squarely down upon him and arrest him in the name of the Cross and in the name of the Eternal Love. But I am afraid of those hindering persons who are half-bred, intellectual

mongrels, pedants, people who know a few things and only enough to enable them to ask other people to fill up what they do not know, and then to accept the explanation as if they could have given it themselves if they had cared to speak so low. Beware of the pedant everywhere; especially beware of him when he undertakes to handle the things of God.

The question which the apostle put to the Corinthians is the question of all days. The Apostle Paul looks in upon the churches, and in the name of Christ says, What kind of preaching have you here? are you preaching to men, sinful, awful, shameful; or do you never refer to these things, but take the evil of the world for granted and leave it in the hands of the devil? That is poor preaching, poor praying, and poor singing. We are wrong, we are failing in duty, if we do not say in the construction of every service and the building up of every plan of operation, Now how will this fit the unlearned? what shall we say to the unbeliever if he challenge us at this point? We have made many churches, comfortable places, we know where we begin and how we continue and where we end, and if so much as a little child were to cry out in the middle of our perfunctory service we would be quite startled and wish the little angel to be cast out. You know nothing about the Church if that is your view; the Cross you have never touched if you despise the unlearned, and if you cannot stop to explain your faith to the earnest, simple-minded inquirer or unbeliever you have not experienced the evangelising and redeeming spirit of the Cross.

Now if there should come into your assembly an unbeliever what real enjoyment he would have! He would sit in some corner of the gallery or on the floor and say, What extraordinary persons these are! they are always finding fault with their own Bible; they first accept the Bible, they are ordained to preach the Bible, and the first thing they do is to find fault with the Bible, and tear the Bible to pieces and put it together again in some clumsy fashion. Ha, ha! this is the grimmest comedy of all the world's impious fun. There is the preacher, and he has nothing to say to me, but he finds fault

with his text, he says Paul never wrote it, Moses never thought of it, and no matter who thought of it or who wrote it, its exposition does not seem to cost him anything; he does not shed blood; why, that man could preach a dozen times a day, because he has nothing to preach; he gives away no nervous power, no spiritual energy, no magnetic force; he does not die that he may save me: I am an unbeliever, and I will remain one. We can only convince sincere unbelievers by sincere belief. The impression to be left upon the unbeliever should be this: Well, whether these men are right or wrong, they are sincere, they mean it; I cannot see with them, but by the God they serve they are men who will fight to the death.

And if the unlearned man should come in, and the unlearned woman who has just left her cooking, and her washing-tub, and her little children, and she has stolen out for an hour, hearing that this was the house of God, what will she hear? Long words and many of them, and she will hear something about the relative and the absolute, and the finite and the infinite, and how Mill contradicts Hamilton, and how Spencer contradicts Mill, and how Lotze laughs at them all; and she will go back to her baking and her mending—with what? But my lord in the pulpit would never think of condescending to speak to a laundress. He is there to be abreast of the times. O hinder him not! Stand back; here is a man who is going to be abreast of the times! It is very sad and heart-breaking and miserable altogether. When the unlearned person, man or woman, wants to go to the house of God it is not to hear theological terms; they have their place, they have their proper place and their proper value, but preachers and church builders should never forget that they do not exist for a party or a sect or section of the human family, but to proclaim the Universal Love in the universal language. I would rather take the opinion of the unlearned in some practical matters regarding the Church and its mission than I would take the opinion of so-called experts. The expert seldom sees through more than one pane in the window; he thinks that the window is made up of his particular

pane. He does not understand the universal language of sympathy, he does not recognise the fact that men can understand the central facts of the Gospel without always understanding their technical and theological clothing. Yet the unlearned man may pick up something at his Father's table. Perhaps the only thing he cannot understand is the sermon; then at whose hands shall his blood be required? He can understand the hymns, and he now and then can come into the prayer; again and again in the reading of the Scriptures he hears a voice that sings to his waiting and wondering soul; but when he comes to the exposition of the Word he should be in high delight, he should say in his heart, This is for me, this is a letter from heaven especially intended for my poor heart.

We must therefore, in thinking of the congregation, think of everyone, of the great and the small; and, blessed be God, I repeat that when a man is truly great he is always willing to wait for the slow and the crippled and the infirm. He says, The preacher is now speaking to a class of persons of whom I am not one, but my not being one does not destroy the class of persons especially contemplated, and there must be something in the discourse for that class. So the sermon should be high as heaven and low as the ground we tread, balmy as the air we breathe, friendly as the sunlight that plays around us.

Now if there shall come into your church, Paul would say in modern phrase, those that are broken-hearted, how will they go out from listening to your worship and your exposition? I was ill at ease, my heart was melted within me; I said, I will go up into the house of God and hear something that will do me good; the man of God will sympathise with me, he will speak as if he actually knew I was there, and he will now and then look at me straight in the face, as if he would say in a symbolic language, This is for you; he will bring me balm from Gilead, he will tell me of the Physician that is there, and I shall come back having left my burden at the foot of the Cross. Will it be so? Hear me, man ordained, ordained to preach the atoning blood and the healing balm, will he leave you relieved, helped, blessed, inspired? or will

he go out of the door saying, I have missed my way, I asked for bread and I have been given a stone? The most of people are broken-hearted. This audience seems to be without a care, without a fear, without a sorrow: I tell you that there is not a heart here that has not had or will not have its own bitterness, its own burden, and that is not crying out in some way or other, O man of God, help me! He preaches to the times who preaches to broken hearts.

And suppose, in the language of the apostle, one should come into the church who is crying out in his own heart, "What must I do to be saved?" will he hear the answer? Will he find salvation ridiculed? will there be no mention of the Cross? "What am I to do? I long to be saved, how is salvation to be accomplished? O tell me what thou canst of the way of life!" There is your opportunity. We should never preach the Gospel or conduct the public worship of God as if the whole arrangement were intended for a class. Thus we have localised the Gospel, thus we have shut up the Cross in a special cabinet, and thus we have lost the age, and the age has gone to find what it can in meadow and stream and starry sky. We are to blame for all this; you preachers and leaders of the Church are to blame for this loss of human interest in divine institutions. You have called yourselves a well-to-do congregation. It was worse than swearing, it was blasphemy blaspheming itself until it was black in the face. You say, "The people who attend there are all well-to-do, persons of reading" —I question that very much—"persons of highly respectable relationships." A curse, seven curses, on it all! We want, not classes, but men; not sections, but universalities; we want the Gospel preached in every range of intellect, of power, of sympathy. Then I would exclude none from the congregation, I would exclude none from the pulpit. I welcome the highest intelligence, the most penetrating mind, the most brilliant and audacious and inflamed imagination; and I welcome also all the simplicity and tenderness and pleading love that the most true-hearted of the servants of God can supply. Oh the blasphemy! they said that the church was attended by "a considerable congregation of the most respectable people in the neighbour-

hood"; and I saw the harlot pass by, and heard her say, "Yes, this is no place for me," and I saw drunken men reeling by and laughing and saying, "This place ought to have kept me from this drunkenness, but this place never did anything for the likes o' me." And I have seen the little children playing marbles outside the church, and never imagining that they had any right to be in the Father's house. Ah me! we are dead, and we read our little essays and our eloquent periods, and we preach to the times, leaving the unbeliever and the unlearned and the lost to go to the devil that is supposed to have made them. Many will tell me that there are places on purpose for the unlearned, unbelieving, immoral, wicked, and castaway people. There may be a point of truth in that, there may be even much more than a point, but whatever is like a wedge that cuts the human family into sections is objectionable to me. I want an all-uniting and all-consolidating Gospel and revelation of the Divine Heart. I am not sure that I am deeply interested in any arrangement that will enable me to say, Take these people away from my pew, if you please, and get them some place outside, get them a hall, but don't let them sit upon my red cushion or come into my blue-coated pulpit; get them a place! I have no objection to giving a guinea a year to get them away. O thou whited sepulchre, thou beast of perdition, thou knowest nothing of the love of the Christ and of Him who spoke to the common heart.

The great purpose of coming together in the church is edification, building up; so we must have as much as possible of intelligence that can be appreciated; not intelligence that moves itself right away from the tracks of the people, but that truer and more intelligent intelligence which says, Now where can we begin? where are these people prepared to make an opening? let us bring the Gospel into their civilisation, into their language, classical or unclassical, and give them to feel that there is something in the Gospel for the building up of their hearts and lives. That is right. Heaven bless the thought.

There is one other aspect to be looked at, or the preacher would sit down without having completed his purpose. We must not expect any one man to

absorb the whole service to himself alone. Even the unlearned man must not come into the church and say to the well-informed man, You have no business here, because all this church arrangement is for the unlearned and ignorant man; so withdraw, if you please. No! A man is not bound at a great civic feast to eat up the whole banquet; I do not know any law by which a man attending the great civic feast should be compelled to eat up the whole bill of fare. I should recommend him not to do so; let him take what suits him, let him take exactly what he wants or what he needs, and be content with that. But, remember, that the lines you omit may be the very lines that will suit some other man. So it must be in the setting up of the religious service. There should be something for everybody. No man should find fault with the portion of another; he should say, This is not the portion that I immediately care for, but my brother will relish it, his very soul will be in an ecstasy of thankfulness and delight. This should be so in the sermon, in the prayer, in the whole organisation of the service. Well, that is not for me, I think I have got beyond that, but there is a man here to-day who needs that exactly, I will wait until he has received this food of the soul into the very centre of his heart, and I will pray that God may bless the bread to his using. That is good hearing, that is Christian hearing. Not what you want and only what you like; you shall have your portion, the preacher is quite as intelligent as you are, and he will flash light upon you, but he is more sympathetic than you are, and he will say, I must wait for this good old pilgrim, for this poor infirm man, for this plougher of the fields, who knows only words of one syllable, and I must as it were go down to him and have a special interview with him; but he must not detain me all the time, because other men I have, other grades of mind I must recognise. And therefore a Christian service should be the grandest oratorio that Handel ever dreamed, that any poet in words or in tones ever imagined.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the whole wealth of God, make us strong and glad. Amen.

[*Sunday Evening, September 9th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALmighty GOD, we thank Thee that the tabernacle of God is with men upon the earth, and that our little crumbling walls lean against the walls of the temple of God. Thus are our houses sanctified and ennobled and daily lifted up into greater meanings. We bless Thee for the house which becomes a home, and we thank Thee that Thy house makes homes of our houses. Oh that we might know how true it is that we live and move and have our being in God! Our fires are lighted at Thy sun; behold, we have nothing that we have not received. We often creep into Thy house because we are in sore need, the pain is very keen, the sense of emptiness is most desolating; then we say we will arise and go unto our Father, for in our Father's house is bread enough and to spare; it is the house of bread. We live upon the bread sent down from heaven. Give us a great view of God's house; may we find it everywhere—in the great sun, in the blade of grass that is crushed by our foot. Jesus Christ made a great house for us, He gave us great welcomes, He had a feast in the wilderness; He brought deliverance through the Cross. Oh the miracle, the thrilling wonder of it all! This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. May we have no house that is not God's house; then we shall be saved through Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us. Amen.

CIII.

OUTWARD BUSINESS.*

"The outward business of the house of God."—Neh. xi. 16.



WE have prayed about that house, we have thanked God that the crumbling walls of our little houses lean against the foundations and walls of God's dwelling-place. Do we not sometimes use words without fully comprehending their innermost meaning? Words have two meanings: the facial, if I may so express it, and the cubical. Do we catch the music, do we see the vision of the house of God? Do the words balance well? "House" is a familiar word, "God" is the most awful of all words; yet here we find them together in sublime unity and relation "House . . . God." Sometimes I feel such a sense of want of balance between these words, and sometimes they seem to run into one another as if the one without the other would be incomplete. You find it difficult to balance "house" and "God," but are there not other difficulties which we may have overlooked? Who can balance "house" and "home"? Are they not the same thing? No, no; many a house was never a home, and never can be until there be something cast out of it which is alien to the nature and quality of God.

I begin, therefore, by asking a question, What is the House of God? Answer me at least mentally. "A church." Not necessarily. "A chapel, a sanctuary, a tabernacle, a temple." Not necessarily. You may have a cathedral without a house of God, and you may find in some little thatched cottage or chapel on the hillside all the cathedrals out of heaven. Hence it is that we must not look at magnitudes, sizes, revenues, apparatus, but at the ideal, the symbolic, the spiritual, the sacramental; then the great may become little and the little

* Preached by request of the Institute of Journalists.

may become great, or they may be both equally great in the sight of Him who builds all houses, the wasp's honeycomb as well as the bee's, and that piles up the constellations into structures of thought and poetry. "I never go to the house of God." How do you know that? Have you ever been really out of it? Let us go to Jacob for an answer; he seems, so far as I can recollect, to be the author of the expression; it may have been whispered to him; in the song-dream, in the vision-glory, he may have seen some outline of a building. What said he when he awoke after the delight and yet the torment of the dream? He said, "This is none other than the house of God." There are those who only know houses by architecture, by walls, stones, bricks, buildings, and divers expressions of the architectural act; they tell us that when the psalmist said he would dwell in the house of the Lord for ever he could not have written that psalm under such and such a date, because then the temple was not built. The temple not built is the eternal temple, the only temple worth caring for, unless there be some smaller place that has caught the spirit and the intent of the vaster edifice. David saw the house of God away among the stones, in the silent wilderness, in the place of desolation, and in the hour when his sin came back to him and all his former life and there crept in upon his vision a new creation—the house of God.

Well, now, what was Jacob's environment at that time? Churches, chapels, institutions? Not one. Yet he was in a walled place, walled in with light, and ministered to by ascending and descending angels. We must get the house of God and many other things back from little definitions and narrow and petty localisations, and regard the universe as God's house, and say then, Thou poor wanderer, thou who didst use thy mouth for blasphemy, even thou hast never really been out of the house of God. What was Jacob's environment? Nature; the green earth, or the stony wilderness, or the blue heaven, or the rippling brook, or the flashing stream, each one, every one, all helping to make up a symbolic building. We have been unjust to nature, we have loaded her too heavily; we are unjust and cruel to nature when we

take her by the throat and say, Thou didst make thyself. Be gentle to her; the poets have called her mother, and it is as mother, with all her green mounds and pillows, that we should regard her. She gives us so much water and honey and so many things that have the taste of a feast in them. Of course there is a kind of mind or temperament that almost insists upon the man characterised by it making everything as little as possible; there is a genius, I had almost said, of littleness, making things paltry, petty, worthless, taking out of them the sunlight and divesting them of the music. It is sad to be near such people; they make the house very dreary; when they have left our hearthstone we feel as if our poor life had been robbed to the uttermost farthing. Such are the mockers, the men who reduce things to mere laughter—not healthy laughter, which is good, but the mocking spirit that laughs at prayer and takes no interest in music. So we go into the garden and see all these beautiful flowers, and supposing them to be the work of the gardener, we say, “Sir, thou didst make these lovelinesses.” And he, being an honest man, answers, “No, no; I do but till and cultivate and watch and do divers kinds of mechanical work; these sweet little things are not of my making, they caught their grace from heaven, and the fragrance they emit they caught from Him who breathed it into their nostrils.” Have little to do, at least as little as possible, with men who diminish and belittle all things. They will not help you; I will tell you their name, their alias—thieves; they have stolen the God out of the grass and out of the sky.

Of course Jacob, having seen all these things, could have said, “Nightmare!” That is all the answer some men can return to the universe—nightmare, indigestion, the trouble of the last few weeks; I have been disordered, and what I see is vapour or nothingness. You can so deplete your own lives, you can so live as not to see anything in the hymn or psalm or text or Cross of Christ. If I were speaking to such men I would not necessarily charge them with insincerity or hypocrisy; I would remind them that they are suffering from a certain kind of disability. They do not mean to be offensive to the high spirit

of things; they simply ignore it, or do not realise it. But there are many other things they do not realise or recognise. We must always remember that. Religion is not the only thing in which some men are infidels or unbelievers. You think that "infidel" is an ecclesiastical term, a chapel word, a church vocable. No; it penetrates the whole substance of life. Men are infidel at many points; and infidelity never made any man strong or grand, a fountain of consolation or a Hercules of help; it robs man, utterly depletes and crushes man. Some men have said in written books, therefore I am not quoting from memory, that when they gave up their recognition of God, they gave up pictures and music and the parabolic and symbolic aspects of the very Nature they professed or endeavoured to worship. When God goes, He takes a lot with Him.

It is perfectly possible, let me repeat again and again, for a man to deny and repudiate, and to localise himself in a few petty relations. We can do that; we can live such lives that if we touched a flower we would kill it. Let us so live as to make the house, even though a little one, grand, tender in all its ministries, a nest in the heart of God. Young men of this great Babylon, avoid any man who would make things less, and crumple the heavens as he would crumple a handful of blotting-paper; and wait diligently upon the ministry, whether written or spoken, that gives you larger views, further outlooks, clearer realisations, and brings the horizon near you that it may leave much in your lot and lap.

Let us be very careful how we divide things into outward and inward. The time will come when we shall get rid of even Scriptural uses of outward, alien, strange, foreign. All these words are doomed to go. "I saw no temple therein," said John. Why did he not see a temple in heaven? Because heaven was all temple. He who lives in light does not even see the sun; he who lives in God has no moon, for he has no night. But men are crafty and expert almost at making little definitions, parties, separations, and the like. I will tell you what I have heard, and you will tell me whether it is true. There was a man

who rose in history, I suppose long ago, and he divided music into sacred and profane. I never heard any profane music; I do not believe there is any. But some men would be nothing without their little definition; they live on that bare bone. I have heard sacred music, and I have heard music profaned, perverted, taken away to bad uses, made a seduction on the road to hell. But we must get back to real definitions and proper qualities, and see things as God meant them to be seen. You sing some sweet little Scotch song; is it profane because it is not in the psalm-book? It might be in the psalm-book, for its sentiment, its lilt, its tone, its power of touching the highest, sweetest, tenderest associations of life and memory; I will not have it called profane. You can sing sacred music profanely; that is often done. I would not give you anything for music, however sacred may be the words which it expresses, if it be not sung in the spirit of its own sacredness. It kills me to think that a man could sing "He was despised and rejected of men," and then go away and drench his throat with intoxicating drinks. If such an irony were possible, we should assemble to consider it, repudiate it, anathematise it; for it takes out of the heart of Christ all that made that heart what it was, and gives it to the mocker and the men of cruel tongue.

I have also heard of profane history and sacred history. There is no profane history. History truly written, and true to human experience, is an aspect of Providence, an elucidation of that marvellous mystery which penetrates all life, and that whispers to us in many a moment of unexpectedness, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered; not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father; it shall be given you in the same hour what ye shall say;" and the same night when Herod would betray the hated Apostle, the angel will be there before Herod can get his key into the lock. I believe in God, I believe that the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: I believe that God knoweth my downsitting and my uprising, my going-out and my incoming, if so be I live in His spirit and give Him the poor tribute even of a trembling

faith. Who is it that rises amongst us and splits up history into sacred and profane? What right has such a man to define and separate and classify? I would follow the historian who sees God in everything, in the defeat as well as in the success of the battle; I would follow the humble faith which sees as true an answer to prayer in a negative as in a positive. Profane history?—it is a lie! I am not referring to history that is falsely written and written with a false purpose, but I am referring to the inner history, the history that God designs, inspires, and conducts, and all through the ages of that marvellous unfoldment I hear a voice saying, “He shall reign whose right it is;” and I am satisfied with a great satisfaction.

And there are persons who have carried their defining powers, if powers they be, into what are called ecclesiastical matters, so that now we have “The Temporalities” and “The Spiritualities.” What man devised so insane a distinction? There is a sense, but a very poor, narrow sense not worth considering, in which the work of the Church may be divided into the temporal and the spiritual, but, properly regarded, in the spirit of Christ and in the spirit of the Cross, the gift of the poor man’s penny may be as true an act of worship as the singing of the anthem. There is nothing secular, or if there is anything that we call secular it is only for momentary convenience. He that made all things is God; He built the wall of the Church, and He will take care of the roof; it is His place. How did Jesus Christ define the house of God? No man ever defined it as He did; He said “the house of prayer”—the house that has an upward look, the house from which we take flight for heaven, the house of adoration, aspiration, thanksgiving, supplication, heart-broken entreaty. And what have we done—eh? what? Jesus would say to us, My Father’s house is a house of prayer, but ye have turned it into a den of definitions, a nest of denominations, a ganglion of impossibilities, contrarieties, and prejudices and creeds that have no real foundation in the eternal. We may not have turned the Church into a den of thieves, but we may have turned it into a den of definitions. Man is not saved by any technical defini-

tion; then salvation would be of works and not of grace. How we are saved we know not; nay, the Lord Himself says, I will give thee a parable, and let that be thine answer to all who would interrogate thee unduly or unworthily: the wind bloweth where it listeth; thou hearest the sound thereof, and thou canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Definitions have their place; that place may be useful, that place may be educational, but that use may also be mischievous. Prayer is the inclusive term which includes all proper definition and all pure and inspired aspiration.

Now, speaking in regard to any one particular class, and especially the class that is represented at least in some degree by the journalists who have done me the distinct and undeserved honour of inviting me to recognise in this way the great institution whose name they have created, and whose ministries they conduct,—I give you hearty welcome. I have broken up my holiday in order to be here to-night. I am hardly yet vocally fit to speak to you because of the disuse of my voice for a few weeks, but though in weakness in that respect I will, in the spirit of comradeship and true manly, healthy co-operation, bid you welcome to the poor hospitality of this place. I want to shake hands with every honest worker in any department of the great ministry of life. We ought all to be one; if we have the right purpose and the right spirit we are one. We may not adopt our opinions all round—I do not desire any such adoption—but the unity can be in the spirit when it cannot always be in the opinion. I have heard something of ideal journalism. I know when it is coming: ideal journalism is coming when we create ideal society. It is the people that make both the pulpit and the press. The people can have what preaching they are determined to have, and they can have what newspapers they are determined to have—nothing can stand against intelligent, educated, earnest, burning public sentiment. You could empty this pulpit in six days or six weeks, and I beg you to empty every pulpit that is not true to its divine function. Hiss the man, have nothing to do with him; say, Go away from this and preach thy folly and thy

baptised atheism to the winds that will not heed thee. And so is it with the press. The people make the newspapers. That sounds rather strangely, but it is a solemn fact when you get right down to the base and root of things. The people rule the country; the people make the House of Commons. The great human sentiment rules everything—may it be ruled by God, sanctified and ennobled by His Spirit, so that we may have good pulpits, good papers, good Parliaments. I do not want the ideal newspaper. I have no time to read it, and no desire to believe it, and on the whole I can well do without it. I want to know the facts. If there was a murder yesterday tell me about it, and if a man or woman was divorced last week what is the story? hold it in the sunlight and let the sun burn it. I want to know the facts, the events or things which did really occur, and I want to study them from the religious as well as the social standpoint: they are to me lessons in human nature, they are to me a kind of outside theology; I see man revealed, I am shown what the heart could do when it could have all its own way, and I am thankful to know the facts. But would you report many things that are supposed to be almost indecent? Certainly. There is nothing you can report to-day that is not stale; it is all in the Bible; and if there are things in the newspaper you cannot read aloud in your family, you will find them all in the Bible, but in their right setting, in their right atmosphere; they are not gathered together like a cesspool, they are set in relation, they show what human nature is, what God is, what redemption is, and what is required to lift such a world back into the family of the unfallen stars.

I dare say some of you may in some moment of inattention or genial frivolity have done even the pulpit injustice; but the pulpit may have done you injustice. Why not begin again? That is my favourite creed everywhere; forget and forgive, and begin again; and outside that law and policy what can you find that is noble and beautiful? I do not want to make you Congregationalists or denominationalists of any kind whatsoever. For the mere denomination, that is, the mere name, I care

nothing; I have said that I would not sit in wet boots for two hours for any denomination under heaven. Your laugh is sympathetic. But do not let us imagine that because we would not go to any place of worship, therefore we are good and true. We are not good and true on that ground; we may be good and true, but not because we do not go to certain churches. My advice to all young folks is constantly this: Go where you can see most of God, most of the Cross, where there is most bread for your soul, and, no matter what the denomination is—Catholic, Anglican, Nonconformist—you must have God, Christ, redemption; and when you realise all that is meant by these great words, you will find good in every institution, and the better you are the better will many an institution be seen to be. Let us take quality if we would receive quality: let us be noble if we would see nobility; let us see Christ, and then we will see that even Zaccheus, a rich man among publicans and a taxgatherer, even he, in the words of Christ, will become to us a son of Abraham. Some of you and some of the preachers have great trials and difficulties. I have often been broken-hearted in my work; the seed has not come out in fruitage as I expected it would, my labour has been as it were in vain; and men may have mocked me when I was lowest down, when I felt depressing influence more and more, so that the very soul was gone out of me. Brethren, journalists, preachers, leaders, authors, merchants, heads of houses, let us know more of God, that we may know more of one another.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, and peace, the triune blessing of the Triune God, abide with us in all our labour, pain, disappointment, joy, and remind us that we are on the way to heaven! Amen.

[*Sunday Morning, September 30th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou hast been good to us with great and overflowing goodness, and therefore we will not be silent in the house that is called by Thy name. In our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare, and we perish with hunger ; we thank Thee for this hunger and for this perishing ; they bring us to the right house and to the right table, they bring us to the heart of God. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thine help, is thy continual gospel. We hail it, our hearts receive it, our lives would answer it. Behold, the hand of the Lord is full, and His eyes are full of light, and His heart is one great throb of tenderness. Who would not praise Thee ? who would not worship at Thy feet ? We come to Thee in the name and by the grace and power of Christ, without whom there is no prevailing prayer. He is our Intercessor, and He is our intercession ; He is our Priest, and He is our offering : the mystery of love, the mystery of life. It is in His name we stand ; in that name there is room enough for all sinners. We want to touch the hand that has been guiding us all these days, we want to receive from Thee, the living God, a sign of Thine own gladness that we have come again to multiply our songs. Behold, good is the Lord our God ; we see that goodness everywhere ; every day it shines upon us, for it is the light of the dawn ; every night we feel how near it is, for it is the light of the darkness. We bless Thee most of all for the Cross ; we cannot understand it until we suffer it ; we bless Thee this is not a letter remote from us, but a power and a conquest within us. Only they who have suffered with Christ can understand His priestly atonement. Drive away from that Cross all who misunderstand it, and yet think that they can explain it ; they hurt the world, they hinder sinners, they are speakers of the letter only, they know not the interior music, the uttermost inwardness of love. Thou hast a people upon the earth ; we bless Thee for them if we do but poorly represent Thy kingdom, yet now and again we are conscious of a great desire to put it fully before the nations and give the heathen to understand Thy meaning. We are poor ministers of Thine ; we show forth the kingdom but dimly : oh that we might be stronger hearts and be clearer mediums through whose lives Thou canst express the heavenly estate. We thank Thee that Thou art gathering in the elect, and Thy election is bounded only by Thy love. Thou art perfecting the company of the saints ; we almost hear their voices,

our hearts in their best dreaming do hear them, and our hearts are made young and glad because of the soft splash of that rain of praise. We give one another to Thy love, we wed one another at the altar of the universe, heart runs to heart, life clings to life, because surely it will only be another night, and then the morning cometh. Amen.

CIV.

FROM THE FOUNDATION.

"To sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father."—MATT. xx. 23.



HIS is part of Christ's answer to the mother of Zebedee's children. It was a little family gathering; they had made it all up among themselves. There are many toy-makers. They thought it would be well if the kingdom of heaven could be in some way divided amongst the family. Some people's notion of heaven never gets beyond some family arrangement. They are themselves little, and can only do with little notions. "Then came to Him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping Him, and desiring a certain thing of Him." I do not like the junction of the words, "Worshipping" and "desiring." The junction may be right, perfectly and absolutely right, but then again it may not be right. There are selfish petitions and desires. This homage goes for nothing. "And He said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto Him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on the left, in Thy kingdom." How could she be denied? We are always ready to attribute inspirations to those ideas which we can turn to golden account. If we can sell the idea, we are quite sure it was inspired. Said Jesus, "Ye know not what ye ask"; then after a few remarks He said, "To sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father." What is the right translation that goes

through all the ages? It is, "To sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give, except to those to whom it is already given." The whole thing is done. We think that God is living from hand to mouth, inventing a new policy for every day, introducing surprises into the economy of His kingdom. Jesus Christ rebukes that foolish and truly atheistic notion, for there is no God in it, and He says in effect, The kingdom is already apportioned; the right hand seat and the left hand seat are already reserved. God does nothing by surprise and offhand and at the bidding of human suggestion; from the foundation every seat was settled.

"From the foundation"; how we spoil that expression by tacking to it the little, simple feebleness "of the world." Poor man could not rest short at the word foundation, where he ought to have rested, he must add "of the world." Give him his poor little globe, it fits him for this moment; he will get tired of it by and by, eternity will make him scorn it; but meanwhile let him have it—his globe, his world, his little sphere, his football universe. "From the foundation," that is strong; "from the foundation of the world," that is pitifully weak. How some men fritter their sentences into nothing! Something before anything—that is what we must get at. Until we do get at that we shall be pottering around small ideas, little bubble-like notions that come and rise and fall and burst and are forgotten. Something before the first. The schoolboy will tell me that the protoplasm means something that was at the first, and the schoolboy will be nearly right, he will only be short of right by the length of infinity. Protoplasm, the first plasm or film, more a thought than a thing; proto-martyr, the first martyr, the example martyr. Can we get beyond the first? Certainly; it is poor resting anywhere that has a name. But man loves names. He has labelled his theology, he belongs to a sect. He is joined to his idols, but, God helping me, I will not let him alone. "From the foundation"; and where is the foundation? It is in the thought of God, in the purpose of the Eternal, away beyond all the little candle-stars, away where no comet has ever been seen by mortal vision, away to the everlasting, the unbeginning, the

inconceivable, the ineffable—that wondrous position that we want to define by polysyllables, and cannot.

Now Jesus Christ was with the Father from the foundation; He was part of the foundation; yea, He was an essential element in the foundation; He was before all things, and by Him all things consist, and by Him all things will be judged. When there were no fountains abounding with water He faced the Eternal Love. So when He speaks thus to the mother of Zebedee's children He does not renounce His majesty, He uses His limitation that He may help her beyond her own. All things, according to the teaching of Christ, have been settled from the foundation, part of the divine purpose, part of the divine nature, wondrous, ineffable things, before even dreams began or poetry fashioned a harp. How this destroys all our little schemes and themes, and turns them upside down, and throws them out of some window, to be thrown out of which is to be killed at the bottom. Let us look at this marvellous answer to this most superficial and impertinent mother.

See how the Incarnation is defined. Let us reverently paraphrase the music of the Son of God: Lord, I have come to do Thy will in the prepared body; I have come to show the world something of what the world could never see, the glory I had with Thee before the world was. Mark that "was." How He hews the central verb to pieces and lets it drop in scales and flecks at His feet that He may stamp on them! A body hast Thou prepared for me; it is written in the volume of the book, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God, I come to show Thee, and I come to show all the people that shall ever be on the face of the earth Thy thought, Thy love, Thyself. That process is going on now. The Word is being transliterated and translated, turned into other and further letters, and then the higher translation, which means not verbs and grammars, conjugations and declensions, but music, perception, assimilation of the very nature of God, and a grand uplift far above the poor low level line measured by the flesh and surveyed and appraised by the poor feeble sense of man. The incarnation is

a revelation of the eternal purpose of God. There have been three wonderful declarations of the Word. I use that term as it is used in the opening of the Gospel according to John. The Word was made manifest in matter. Hence we have the sun and moon and stars, and the great spaces, and the dreams visible; we stand in what we term Nature, too seldom realising that it is the Word. God said . . . and it was. It is the clothed Word, the Word with a mantle on, the Word in figure and symbol and visibleness. Men search for it with telescopes and microscopes. That was the first declaration of the Word—matter, radiant, glorious magnitude, distributed with perfect accuracy and absolute fitness part to part. Then, secondly, the Word was made flesh. It was getting nearer to us, touching us, looking at us, dwelling amongst us. The same Word, but in another form, coming with a closer nearness, a deeper sympathy, a diviner penetration. Then the Word made flesh passed away; we knew Jesus Christ in the flesh, but henceforth we know Christ Himself no more by the flesh. What, then, of the Word? Then, thirdly, the Word was made Spirit to dwell in us, not with us. First, to dwell outside us, a great marvellous gallery of glory; secondly, to dwell with us in human form, as bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; and then, finally, eternally, was made Spirit. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. No man can define spirit, though every man is a spirit.

This, then, was the purpose of the Incarnation, to show all men and women in all ages that everything was in the purpose of God and will be settled according to the Divine purpose; and as for the front seats and the back seats and the intermediate seats, woman, man, mother of ambitious sons, all these things were settled from the foundation.

And then see how it not only defines the Incarnation, but how it interprets the great ministry of providence. How many things are settled for us, if we would only believe it, and how many prayers are answered which are never offered except by some divine intent which is a great mystery in the heart of every man. We

have the most of things without asking for them. There are some things it would be absurd to ask for. We owe all the greatest things to prayers we never uttered and never can utter, and would de-Christianise ourselves if we attempted to utter them. We live in the greater prayer. Will you pray that the world may be enlarged to-morrow morning? It is useless for you to offer such a prayer, for it has not strength enough to reach even the roof of the building in which you utter it. The world was given to us without our asking; the Atonement was given to us without our asking. Calvary is not our invention; we did invent a Roman gallows, we never invented the Eternal Priesthood. So it is through and through this whole wonder, this daily miracle of gracious providence; all things are settled, and we cannot in many directions unsettle them, though we can disappoint even God through our rebellion and impenitence and selfishness. Still the purpose of God runs on, keeps on its wondrous way. We are all seated, whether at the right hand or at the left, whether in the front seats or in the hindmost seats; the whole distribution has been effected in the purpose of God, however much we may try to spoil it and however much we may succeed in at least momentarily setting aside the scheme of God. You are a painter, or you are not, and you had nothing to do with it. You are a preacher, or you are not a preacher, and all the men in the world cannot make a preacher of you, it is not in your blood. All things are given to those to whom they are already given. If there be peace in the house peace will be welcome, and you will know that peace has kissed peace, and that the unity intended from eternity has been perfected. You can do this, or you cannot do it: every man has come forth from God with a gift, with a specialty, with a personality distinctively and incommunicably his own. Think of that, and be calm. O thou poor smatterer and thou ill-paid, half-starved tinker going about to assist omnipotence! Sit thou down, fool! sit thou down.

Are all my sorrows fixed for me? Yes, from the foundation. Are they all fixed? Yes, from the foundation, I repeat. These are words of music and words of health and words of light. If I could believe that

I would be happier. There is no other happiness, brother of mine; the only happiness is consonance with God, unity with that which was from the foundation,—I mean the foundation below the foundation, the base below the base, the other base that makes the superficial base a possible term in geometry or economy.

Then notice how it drives men to the unwritten bible of consciousness. Read your own heart, interpret your own desires, search and see whether your very aspirations are not their own answer. The Bible is of no use to me until it gets at the other bible that is in me. Nothing outside can do me any good unless it have a response from within. When I can say to my Lord, "Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth," then I am at rest. This work is not to be done by argument. Oh these argument people! I leave them in the hands of the Lord. I will say again and again that even the Bible is nothing to me unless there be something responding to it in my own nature. I do not say that the response is always immediate, but there is a beginning of response, there is a desire to get another look into that wondrous volume; there is an action in the mind which says, You will find in the Bible all you want; search for it, dig for it, pursue it, never give up the quest; one morning you will see it, and you will see a vision that quenches the midday and shines by a right of its own. Let us therefore read our own nature. Awake, thou that sleepest! for God may be in thee, though thou know it not. O beat upon the door of the chamber in which thine heart slumbers, and awake the sleeper, for it may be thou shalt to-day see the salvation of God. O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him, and He will give thee thine heart's desire. Everything is written concerning thee. They say that the very hairs of our head are all numbered; the old, old saints declared to me that the Lord besets man behind and before, and lays His hand upon him, and thinks about his uprising and downsitting and his outgoing and incoming as if He had but one child, and as if He lavished His love on that one little son. I thank God for the peace which is given to me by the conviction that everything was settled from the foundation. I know somewhat

of the mystery of rebellion, I know that man can be impenitent; God Himself told man that if he did certain things he would die. It was God that revealed death, it was not man that was left to discover it.

Then let us accept the will, and say, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Do not murmur; it is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth good in His sight. Do not agitate yourselves, O poor, tremulous, nervous Christians, who will assist God to carry the universe. Mayhap they can hardly help it. You must not venture too far, however, in touching the ark and helping divine progress in the world; above all things, you must not worry about it. One would think to hear some people talk at their sectional meetings that everything depended upon them, and that if they were five minutes late the whole universe would go to pieces. My dear sir, the universe will stand just where it is if you go out of it. A church agitated about her conquest! a church that forgets the foundation! as if God needed helping and could not do without the first of the archangels. It hath pleased Him to call us into divers ministries; let us be faithful stewards, but do not tremble for the ark. You see certain fightings and tumults going on, and you are so concerned lest the kingdom of God should come into danger. Never! cannot! God is our refuge and strength; therefore will not we fear. But the mountains are being removed, and they are being cast into the sea! Let the little miserable trick go on; the eternal Throne is inviolate. Remember that we are in a kingdom. We are in heaven, or we will never get there. Our salvation is already a fact, or it is not a fact. I have my seat in heaven, or I have not, and when I go to the great assembly hall I will only ask where the seat is. If I have a seat there, the first will be front or back just as God may be pleased, He will fix the seats, and every one of them will be the first seat, every one will be at the right hand, every one will be just where we would like it to be when we get there, and every one, poor, poor pilgrim, with hardly a crust in the house, without fame, without wealth, when thou dost get thy seat in heaven apportioned for thee from the foundation, thou wouldst not exchange it for any other seat.

I thank God that I am amongst you once more. You have already discovered that I have not come with a new gospel, but with a Gospel from the foundation. I am not living in argument and in verbal chaffering, I am living in the peace of God which passeth all understanding. We shall have festival times together, God willing. He has been showing me something of His kingdom that I have never quite seen before, and He has been assuring me, though I have thought that the barrel of meal was failing fast, that there is as much meal left as will fill all the necessity of life. He has told me in whispered love that we have hardly begun our companionship yet, and as for our work, we have only been looking at it in general outline. He told me that I have not yet seen the true crystal river and the great hidden fountain which will break forth in torrents of love upon our lives, in the degree in which we are simple-minded and true-hearted. So we need not think yet of insolvency and incompetency and insufficiency. I have seen Him break the bread, and that which was very small became very large, and if I have asked Him how that came to be He would momentarily turn aside and say, It was so from the foundation. Let us live in God, and let us be fearless men. There are iniquities to be denounced, false practices to be unmasked, and treacheries that are to be hunted down to their proper hell. I want the young man to arise who is by years fitted for this kind of work, but if he does not come, and come soon, some of the old ones may take fire, and be made young again by God's renewing grace. The offering of love is now to be taken. I like to describe the collection by that name. Answer as you can the love of God. He loved us first; we love Him because He first loved us. And let any man abstain who likes, but there will be many who will delight to acknowledge the goodness of God and give Him some sign of thankfulness.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, abide with us, and give us assurance that we are on the foundation. Amen.

(For Order of Service see page 104.)

[*Sunday Evening, September 30th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we come to Thee by the appointed way. Other way there is none that is acceptable. We come by the way of the Cross ; we find our prayer and our answer on Calvary. To-night we have come for vision, revelation, newness of aspects of truths old as Thyself. Thou always hast one remaining vision ; we want to see it now. Thou hast blinding visions that put out the noonday, and leave men half-dead and half-blind and in great bewilderment because they are sure of Thy nearness. Thou knowest what would suit us best, and Thou wilt not withhold ; let it be a vision of love such as we have never really seen before—the blood-love, the red-love, the crimson glory. We are saved by the shedding of blood ; we did not always understand it so, but by Thy grace we begin to see it now. The shedding of blood is for the remission of sin, and the blood is the love of Thine own heart : may we see it and rejoice whilst multitudes are taking interest in noisy nothings, poor miserable tumults and uproars. We would be hidden in the sanctuary of God, and see the love which binds all things into eloquent unity. Let it be a vision of light upon familiar subjects ; may we find new flowers on old roads ; may we see new stars in ancient heavens. In some way reveal Thyself to us as Thou hast not done before, so that men may be startled into newness of life, so that men may see the meaning of things, and be no longer fools, but wise, and redeeming the time with carefullest economy. Deliver us from the noise of the hour, from the wildness and agitation of men who only have God in their creed, but not in their hearts. May we all come to know that things are settled from the foundation, from the beginning, and that we live upon the revelation of their meaning day by day through the gracious ministry of God, whom we know as the Holy Ghost.

Turn these poor words of ours into prevalent prayer. Amen.

CV.

BY REVELATION.

"By revelation."—GAL. ii. 2.



AUL was fond of the word revelation. "When it pleased God to reveal His Son in me" I "went up by revelation"; "If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God will reveal this also." We have almost disused the word revelation, inasmuch as we have churchified it and locked it up in so-called sacred premises. This is a wicked trick, it is one of the knaveries of the devil. He likes to churchify words. We ought to universalise them, to bring them out into the open air, and look at them in the summer noonday light; by so doing we should be richer, wiser, happier. But notice how knavish the devil is, and always was and ever must be. If he can get words of great meaning thoroughly shut up in the Church, he does not care how rich is the painted window on which we write their names. He is quite willing that we should take all the words that are really catholic in their meaning and universal in their application, and drop upon them some dew or some holy water, and put them safely into any corner of the church—only keep them inside. Leave him the thoroughfare, leave him the market-place; then take what toy-words you like, and paint them and gild them and lock them safely up. In this way we have depleted the language of many rich and thrilling words. One of these words is revelation, or any of its varieties. We now speak of discovery. That seems to mean so little as to be practically without effect in the warfare to which we are called. The great enemy is quite willing that we should discover things; he knows it will please our vanity; it will show us how great we are and penetrating and clever. We must not, however, use the word reveal, or revealing, or revelation, that has

quite a religious sound; and anything religious is unacceptable in hell. Yet it is quite wonderful to see how this ministry of revelation penetrates the whole area and purpose of life. Sometimes we are startled into its use; we find revelation where we did not expect to find it. We are so familiar with some things that we forget them; we speak so fluently that we do not catch the emphasis of the music.

What could be a greater revelation according to the limitations of the case than the meaning of the alphabet? We never think of that, because we use the alphabet mechanically; it comes and goes just as we will it to come and go. But if you will take the mind right back to the beginning, and say to the little child, You have to learn all these poor curious-looking things; we call them letters, and you have to stamp them on your mind, and get them into your head, and know them every time you see them; and then you may have to put two or three of them together, perhaps six or seven. The alphabet means nothing, but it contains everything in the way of literature. A more stupid face than the face of the alphabet it would be impossible for any imagination to conceive, yet the Bodleian library is in that alphabet, and the Alexandrian library and the total literature of the world. Yet no one letter has any relation to any other; the letters never spoke to one another, they are absolute strangers, but by some means or other, which we call learning or education, we bring them into a kind of transient and undying acquaintance; and then we persuade them to go a little further, and permit a larger familiarity; and then we get letters into syllables, and syllables into words, and words into history, and history into poetry, and poetry into prayer. What a revelation it must have been to us all, though we have no remembrance of it, when we first learned the alphabet! We have lost the sense of the educational value of that mystery. We think we always knew the alphabet. As a matter of fact we did not; learning the alphabet is a species of murder, a very large discouragement clouding the life, and it seemed to us as if we never could master the whole twenty-six. So they gave us toys and pictures and little rhymes, and all sorts of things of a

helpful kind to enable us to make some kind or initial acquaintance with the six-and-twenty mysteries. What a revelation was our first knowledge of the alphabet, when we really got it all, when we could almost repeat the six-and-twenty backwards; how learned we felt, how fit for life, how strongly wise! You have forgotten all these things. So much the worse for you. Sometimes, therefore, we learn by letters or by revelations made to us through the medium of letters, things that are symbolical, things that are quick with a great unrevealed and uncomprehended vitality and meaning. You should get up a lecture on the alphabet; it is the most suggestive lecture subject I know anything about. You think there is nothing in it; you try, and if there is nothing in it, it is clear that there is nothing in you.

Then again we change the ground of revelation, and we learn by experience. Through that gate God comes to man to bind up his wounds, and to take him more closely to His heart, showing him the vanity and transiency of the time-sphere and the space-world, and bathing him in the rivers of eternity. Some men can only learn by experience; they learn nothing by spiritual revelation. Some men cannot understand anything unless they have experienced it. Want of sympathy often arises from want of knowledge. You have never had a headache, and therefore you cannot understand however anybody can be suffering from that complaint. You have never lost anyone, and you cannot understand the meaning of these hot rivers of tears, that awful eloquent silence, that expressive pregnant sigh of the soul. O, how poor is he who has never been desolated!

Then again comes the very highest phase of revelation, namely, the great spiritual communication between God the Spirit and man the spirit, the wondrous illumination, the sudden calling into light, the smiting down that there may be a great rising up. Then the whole enlightenment of the sphere of consciousness; then the ghostly feeling that we have heard it all before; then the mysterious feeling that we must have dreamed it. Then the book is put

before us, the book which is called the Bible, and we feel that we have surely seen it somewhere; that psalm is quite familiar, that going in the top of the mulberry trees is something we heard in the woods near our father's house at home. All these delineations and representations of character,—why, we seem to know all the Bible folk; we have met them; not under their names as given on the written page, but there is not a man mentioned in the Bible or delineated with any completeness that we did not in some sort of way know. The people red-handed with murder, we know them, we have seen them, though they sell their souls for gold. Where did we see them? They are quite familiar to us; though they lie they are not strangers.

Then come the great spiritual revelations, and to these we must presently return. Meantime, let us get acquainted with the fact that revelation is going on round about us, and within us, and that revelation is not a church property. We should bring it into life, daily, experimental, practical life, and talk familiarly about it with tender reverence as a gift from heaven or some sheet of cloud let down fuller of stars than the sky.

Sometimes a man is revealed to himself; he says in blunt frankness that he would not have believed it of himself, it was quite a revelation to him. There he does not object to the word revelation, for it has not gathered around it its brightest robes. Sometimes we are revealed to one another; hence we often use such expressions as, It was quite a revelation to me. What do you mean by revelation? You simply mean, if you will be faithful to yourself, that you have seen the inside of things, that for a moment you have been at God's standpoint, and have seen realities, not appearances; philosophies, not phenomena. No other word will just suit your meaning in such circumstances. You say, It was, I must say, quite a revelation to me; I did not think he was capable of that; I had formed quite a different estimate of the man; I took him to be truthful, frank, genuine, a person to be depended upon; but when he was found

doing what has now been discovered, I assure you it was quite a revelation to me. It was not a revelation to God. God knows the heart, and we have to be revealed to one another, and we have to be revealed to ourselves, and we have so to be revealed to ourselves as to go to the Bible to find out really what we are; there is no other mirror that catches the feature and the colour of our selfhood. The Bible represents it all. You are not to judge yourself with a final judgment, saying, I am not capable of that kind of transaction at all; I should be ashamed of myself if I did that; I do not know, I think I should drop down dead if I were found in such and such circumstances. Wait! The man whom you are now blaming is yourself, yourself in other clothes, yourself in other circumstances. There is not a man that lives that is incapable of being a Judas Iscariot. Judas Iscariot is myself. Until men come to see the depth and breadth of the meaning of such a declaration they can have nothing to do with the Gospel. The Gospel was not for such; the Gospel is for the sick, for the wounded, for the distressed, for the dead, for the self-damning. No wonder that people do not like to hear the Gospel, because in order to hear it they must get rid of themselves, they must get into a true vision of their moral nature; and the heart—not his heart, her heart, my heart, but the heart—is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Do not lose the revelation by going in quest of a mere detail. It is man that is revealed in the Bible; not a man, or some man, but man, without qualifying epithet.

Then we get into the empyrean, higher air, the light that is cloudless. How do we know certain things? By revelation. How do we know God? Only by revelation. How do we know about the forgiveness of sins? Only by revelation. This is not something found out in the schools; this is not a clever answer to a trying enigma; it is God's answer to the enigma of our own misery. That puts a new aspect on things. Certainly it does; but it puts the right aspect on them. We thought the doctrine of forgiveness was a doctrine invented by the doctors of the

Church. Never! It comes down straight from heaven like a solar beam from the sun. It is not for you and me, dear brethren of mine, to discuss the revelation, but to accept it, and I will show you in a moment why we should accept it, and that if we do not accept it we have given away the greatest privilege and supremest joy of life. How do we know that there is any such possibility as the obliteration of the past? Here a very singular mistake is made; it is so like the little vanity of man to make it, and to take his footrule to measure the universe; he will be a long time in getting through his work; I fancy the footrule will soon wear out when it has to measure practical infinity. This is the little argument; it has caused some men to swell into pride; it is to the effect that a thing once done cannot be undone. Now, first of all, what is the thing? secondly, on what is it done? and, thirdly, who told us that it could not be undone? When I listen to the answers I find they are all in relation to some form of material existence. For example: If you drive a nail into a piece of wood you can take it out again, but you can never take the wound back. Then we have long lectures on the conservation of energy and force. And all such illustrations have no relation whatever to this spiritual question. You are judging spiritual things by material energies; your ladder does not reach to the sky. Who knows what is possible or impossible in the distinctly spiritual sphere? You have been told that if you lift your hand you have sent a shudder to the sky, and that the vibration will never, never cease. But this is not a material question; this is a question purely and directly between the soul and God; shut them up together, and let God be president of His own court. We have no analogies, no similitudes, that will even begin to help us; we are plunged into an ineffable mystery; and by living within that sacred, most holy temple, and getting to know God's view of sin and of His children, we come out of that deep communion with a gospel, and a gospel which we must preach, the gospel being that the blood of Jesus Christ takes out both the nail and the wound, and cleanses from all sin. It is a great mystery, but I love it, I need it, I want it. God forgive the marred, bruised, degraded past!

What do we know about the future life? Nothing. How have we come to form some estimate of it? By revelation. No man has seen the future life. Man must be careful not to confine himself to his own power of imagination when he thinks of that possible life. We are wholly indebted to revelation, and I will show you that revelation is no sentiment, and is no invention; for there is another side to revelation, explanatory and final. Wait one moment. I want to see the upper life; they tell me that there is life beyond the grave; I want to believe that; is that a mere invention of your own fertile intellect? Your answer is, It is not an invention of mine; what I know about the future life I know by revelation; and revelation tells me that they are happy over yonder; they say that service is so easy and so delightful that it becomes song, and that heaven is best represented by flowers and music and all things lovely and complete. How do you know all that? By revelation. It is in the Bible, which I have accepted as the man of my counsel and the standard of my judgment; I look upon all things by the light of that lamp. But may it all not be a mistake? It cannot be. The discipline of the Gospel is the proof of its argument. We find people who are discussing with one another. Poor things! They have arguments, controversies, even syllogisms; all these are nothing, and are no proofs, and have no relation whatever to the subject, until a certain corner is turned. What then is the proof of revelation? Discipline. What has this Man Christ Jesus to offer me? The Cross. Is it only one Cross? Every man must bear his own cross, and except a man take up his cross and follow the Christ he cannot be Christ's disciple. Then we have to pay for all these illuminations and delights and forecasts? You have to pay for every one of them; a pang for every laugh, a tear for every delight, an agony for every forecast. The Gospel did not intend to make itself popular then? Never; it makes itself unpopular. That is the reason why the churches are half empty or almost wholly empty in many cases: because the Gospel is a winnower; it sifts the wheat and the chaff, and blows the chaff away. It will not let a man with its approbation take a pew and cheat a customer. It

will not have it; it expels the man, drives him into the uttermost darkness, which is his proper place. If I have to accept the theology of the New Testament or the Old Testament I can only do so on one condition, that is to say, with edification, and real advantage to the soul; and that condition is that I must suffer the Cross I have to explain, and live in martyr-life the faith that I profess. It cannot be done! The theatre will be full, not the church. Who wants to go to agony and suffering and self-slaughter of the soul? Yet that is the price, that is the condition; it comes in some form or other. What we have to get rid of, and my soul burns to bear a testimony in that direction, is the idea that going to church is going to hear the anthem, going to hear the sermon, going to be delighted with some or other form of intellectual excitement or amusement. Oh the pain, the grief! Going to church is going to the Cross, to feel every one of the five wounds, just as livingly agonistic as they ever were. Some people think that to be religious is to have a set of views and a set of books and a set of ecclesiastical acquaintances, and you begin and end the matter in a very simple fashion. No man who talks so begins to know what the Christian religion is. It is self-immolation. The Christian creed is a knife, the Christian theology is a martyrdom. We say the days of martyrdom are over. They will never be over until He comes whose right it is to claim the whole kingdom of manhood for Himself. He who will live godly must suffer persecution in all the centuries. The vulgar martyrdom may have gone, but the spiritual and true martyrdom must remain until we get rid of this flesh and this sin. This is a great mystery, but without this mystery there can be no preaching. Leave the preaching in which this mystery is not the central heart and the noonday light! Persons have got the notion that religion, or the Christian religion, or the Church, or whatever it may be called, is having a set of notions, having an elaborate statement of items which may be consulted from time to time for the purpose of judging whether somebody else is orthodox. Oh the pain, oh the triumph of hell! I prove my doctrine therefore by the discipline. Do the will; have the wounds opened every day. You will

find this no poetry or blank verse, but the gate of heaven, and the only gate, if so be we are following the Christ.

Then, finally, revelation comes and fits in all the gaps and all the strange places of life. Then revelation comes and says, Now let us walk together; O sweet, sweet heart, come with me, and let us walk together. Thou hast a cemetery in thine estate? Yea, I have. Come with me, and we will talk it out on the spot: this grave was for thy good, as well as for the good of the loved one ascended; it was fixed that this grave should be dug on the day mentioned on the marble, at the very moment, it was fixed that it should not be a moment later; this grave is a garden; see, thou canst plant upon this grave the flower of answered prayer; I will go home with thee—which is the worst part of the journey related to the cemetery. There is a kind of grim joy in going to it, but there is a bitter misery only in leaving it. I will go with thee, I will take thine arm, yea, the arm of thine heart. What thou knowest about death thou knowest only by revelation. Blessed, sweet bereaved one, blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. They have got it all over. The enemy can hurt them no more.

SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 30TH, 1900.

Voluntary	...	...	"Air with variations"	...	...	<i>Westbrook</i>
General Confession.						
Invocation.						
Hymn 34	...	...	"Now thank we all our God."			
Scripture Lesson. Ephes. iii. 14-21.						
Anthem	...	...	"Blessing, glory, wisdom"	...	...	<i>Tours</i>
Prayer.						
Hymn 187	...	...	"How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds."			
Sermon.						
Offertory and Quartette :						
"A Hymn of the Homeland"	...	...	...	...	...	<i>Sullivan</i>
Hymn 271	...	...	"My faith looks up to Thee."			

Benediction.

The whole blessing of the Triune God be with us all, till ends life's transient dream. Amen.

[*Thursday Morning, October 4th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

LORD, increase our faith. Let it please Thee to increase our capacity for receiving the gift of faith. May we receive faith as the new life, the new mode of life, the true glory of life : Lord, increase our faith. Thou art the author and finisher ; let it please Thee to give us all the comfort, all the holy, daily strength of faith. Sometimes our faith trembles and is afraid, and fear casteth out faith : Lord, increase our faith. To him that believeth all things are possible ; may we have faith to believe this ; we cannot truly sigh towards the kind heavens without faith, but if we have faith as a grain of mustard seed we shall be able to work such miracles as are useful and confirmative of our faith. Show us what a kingdom faith is, how it rules, how it inspires, how it unites, how it glorifies. Some of us have no faith, the faith we had is dim or dead. We had faith until a certain day well known to Thyself, and then we buried faith ; since then we have been cold, fearful, full of sadness, and misery has driven the hot ploughshare through our hearts. Lord, come back with that faith ; make us as we used to be when we had no fear, when we saw light at midnight and had peace in the storm. If Thou hast been long silent to some souls, and they have come to reckon Thee as a dead Baal that cannot answer prayer, why not return the power of the Cross to such souls to-day, and may they hear a voice whispering and thrilling through their whole lives, saying, Fear not ; it is I. This is a wondrous religious life, yet we cannot leave the Cross, we cannot turn our backs upon the Cross. If we did so for a moment it would be for less than a moment ; the heart longs, yearns, pines for the Cross. So may it be evermore. Amen.

CVI.

AUTHOR AND FINISHER.

"The author and finisher of our faith."—HEBREWS xii. 2.



HAT is exactly how the text reads, in the Authorised Version and in the Revised. Yet that is not the text. Sometimes we lengthen by shortening. How tender is the expression "our faith"! Yet the apostle did not write it. Who cares? It is not the Bible that is to be read, it is the newspaper. This word faith occurs one hundred and fifty times in the Old Testament. You know that? It does not; it never occurs at all. But it is not the Bible that is read, it is any form of exciting falsehood. Yet the word faith in a certain limited sense does occur in the Old Testament, but not at all in any evangelical sense. That is very remarkable. Yes, it is remarkable; and most of us did not know it; and yet we are judges of sermons, and we know when we hear the Gospel! Oh, the black, bitter sadness of it! The word which the New Testament makes so much of, the word faith, is simply ignored by the Old Testament. I want to get that really into our minds before we proceed further. Let it sink well down into the soul. The word which is the very life of the New Testament is never so much as mentioned in the New Testament sense in the Old Testament. Did the Old Testament saints get to heaven without faith? It would seem so, from the letter.

Now let the apostle, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, read the Old Testament to us. We do not want a new Bible, we want a new reader. Who has this gift of vocal light and heart music who will read to us the Old Testament? That man is the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which is the sublimest commentary on the Pentateuch ever written,

the only true commentary on the Pentateuch. A man of such piercing insight and such long intellectual foresight, with such a gift of music, he comes into the house without opening the door. That is always true pastoral visitation—to enter the sickroom without a noise, to approach without a creak. Will the apostle read to us the Old Testament? He will. “By faith Abel.” I thought faith never occurred in the Old Testament. Yes, faith occurred, but not the word. Yet some persons only know things by the word. They only think a sermon is evangelical if it mentions the name of Jesus Christ five and twenty times; that they call Gospel preaching. It may be; it may not be. Oh, the fools that block our way to heaven! “By faith Enoch . . . By faith Noah . . . By faith Abraham . . . By faith Rahab . . . By faith Isaac . . . By faith Jacob . . . By faith Joseph . . . By faith Moses . . .” Why, it was all faith, and we were told that faith was not so much as mentioned in the Old Testament; it now appears that there is nothing else mentioned. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. May the Lord deliver us from the literalists, the men of the letter, the geometrical men who think that the kingdom of heaven is a parallelogram; and Himself lead us into the ineffable music, the infinite joy, the unutterable peace, and thrilling delight. “By faith Abel” found the right way to worship. That was enough for him. No one man holds all the faith. By faith Enoch found the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High, and communed there, and there breathed into heaven. By faith Abraham became the father of the faithful. By faith Isaac consented to be the lamb; for so the etymology of the Hebrew says—a gospel within a gospel; a most wonderful word, that the man who asked who was to be the lamb, or where the lamb was to be, was hiding the answer in the very question which he offered. Blessed be God for this speech of implication, for this manifold speech that has in it when opened out the whole secret of the love and wisdom of God.

I have said that no one man can hold all the faith. That is the lesson of the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. By a certain aspect of faith

Abel . . . ; by a certain phase of faith Enoch . . . ; by a certain degree of faith Isaac . . . ; by another degree of faith Moses humbled the pride of Egypt, scorned its offers, went away to sup with the people of God. Now let us read the text, and take out of it the word "our," that word you so much prized, let it go; it is not in the original language of the text. "The author and finisher of faith"; not "our" faith, which is but an aspect of the true faith, and in so far as it is a true aspect of the true faith is justly referred to the miracle-working power of the Holy Ghost. But the great text is Faith, not our faith, not his faith, but all the faith you can gather together multiplied by infinity; and Jesus is the author and finisher of faith,—the new life, the life that refreshes itself in the life of God, the new mode of life. We have all read, speaking in the language of charity, the great work of Professor Tyndall on "Heat as a Mode of Motion." Who will write a kindred book relating to a higher science,—faith a mode of motion, a mode of life, a mode of suffering, a mode of conquest? As the great Doctor found motion in heat, so we find the soul's motion in faith. We are saved by faith; faith is the gift of God. Then we are delivered from the perplexity that sometimes almost stunned our piety, for we looked at Christians and said, regarding their spirit and conduct, Is that what you call faith? No, it is not; it may be a phase of faith, a transient aspect, and even a growing and expanding aspect of faith, but that is not faith, when accompanied by mean epithets, soft, cramped adjectives. Let some words stand alone; Love, Faith, God, Justice, and many other words are sweetest or strongest or noblest with a crowning majesty when no poor mean epithet is attached to them. So we do not see in any one Christian faith, we see an aspect of faith, it may be a very poor specimen of faith, yet there may be a spark of divinity in it, and it is because there is a spark of divinity in it that we have just now prayed, "Lord, increase our faith." We are not anything more than specimens of faith; some men have faith in one direction, and some have it in another, and the one judged by the other may have no faith at all. So we have come to this critical pass in our religious life that one smug man says about another that he,

the other, has no religion. Oh, the blasphemy! "Judge not that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged." We say of such and such a man that he has no religion. What do we mean? The man may not have my religion, but my religion is a poor thing, a starved thing, his religion may be greater. Why do we sit in judgment upon one another? We say of such and such a case, There was a great want of faith. How do you know? What is faith? Where does it come from? In the beginning God created faith, and He only can give it. God gives all the talents; He gives one man five talents, and another two talents, and another one talent, but all the talents come from His own dear, all-giving hand. We should all like to have the five talents, but He says, Take this one, and work well with it, and see me again; take these two, and do the best you can with them; and thou, here are thy five talents, and yonder is the field: farewell. So he goes into a far country, and returns in due time. But how easy it is to say that such and such a man has no faith, no religion, because he does not sing out of my hymn-book or hold a pew in my church! There is faith in all true belief, even of a theological kind; and what I mean by faith is sincerity of heart. Sometimes the heart is a battlefield of creeds; sometimes I believe one thing in the morning, and another at night; the morning has its climate, and so has the evening. What if it should be so in religion? When things go well with me I have what appears to be great faith; when things go ill with me there is not a more insolvent mendicant on the face of the whole earth. And yet underneath all the mendicancy there is a pulsing, a throbbing, a desire after something beyond and better; that is the germ, if I may so figure it, out of which God will bring kingdoms and glories and final heavens. You must distinguish between faith and the quantity of faith. Faith may be a quality rather than a magnitude. "Great is thy faith" may be an expression which means, true and grand is the quality of thy faith. How much there is in quality! and how foolish, viewed in this light, is the absurd doctrine that all men are equal even in the sight of God! They are not. We are not equally whole men. Some man will touch me with

his loving hand, and make a new creature of me in relation to passing circumstances. Another man will look at me, and add ten years to my life, my age, and the burden of my misery. "Great is thy faith," therefore, may be a reference quite as much to quality as to magnitude. Do not let us contemn men for want of faith, for in some aspects and directions they may have more faith than we. I have envied some people the way in which they can carry the burdens of life. I cannot do so; I go from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fall among temptations and assaults and hindrances, and I am left naked and half dead on the inhospitable roadside. But Jesus comes and recognises what is in me, knows me to be a man, a man saved, a man with the crimson upon him which flowed from one fount alone. Some people mean by faith some long theological nonsense. I wish we could get rid of the word theological. It has killed a great many persons. They think it is a fine word, a great word, and by calling themselves theologians they think they are theologians. We may tell a lie so often as to believe it to be true. Life is a great marvel and somewhat of a puzzle and a mystery. Your little child may have more faith than you have. I sometimes think that the dear little children have all the faith. They can go in directions I dare not face. I have had a little child in my garden go up to a great bulldog, and open the dog's mouth and put his little dimpled fist into it. I would not have recommended that course if he had consulted me before he did it. But the dog seemed to know him, and the child seemed to know the dog; and when I took him away further down the garden he tugged at my arm and said, "Back," and I took him back to the dog. Oh, the trust, the simple, unreasoning, or non-reasoning trust! And is it not so with the spiritual life, that some men in the pew have more faith than some men in the pulpit? We show our faith in different ways and in different degrees; but it may be the real saving faith after all.

I wonder if I can bring up the youngest of my hearers to a new view of this subject. Suppose we say that the subject is light rather than faith; how then would the illustration run? This little candle is

not light, but a light; I can see that. This dim oil-lamp is not light, it is a light; this electric jet is not light, it is a light, an aspect of light, a part-light, it belongs to the great family called light. But you must understand the distinction and the difference between these. Now there is beyond all these aspects and phases of light the true light itself, God's light, not a twinkling star or a dying sun, but Light, the thing itself, the essential glory. That is the meaning of the text. By faith Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and all the rest of the grand heroes did this and that conquest; these were lights, each was a light, but God is Light, and all light comes from God. Do not mistake the little twinkling candle for light in the true sense of that term. It is just the same with yourself, and with Christians generally. I am but a little sparklet, hardly worthy to be called a sparklet; if you want to see light see Jesus, listen to Him, what saith He? "I am the light of the world." So we must make these broad and vital distinctions. Let each shine with his own lustre, let no lamp envy any other lamp, let no light depreciate any other light, let no preacher depreciate any other preacher. All the preachers are necessary; all the voices are not in the one voice; all the gamuts run up into one ineffable music.

I wonder if this lesson can be taught to anybody, or whether we, having seen ourselves for a moment in this or that relation, will go out and straightway forget what manner of view we really saw. There is a sense in which Jesus is the author and finisher of my faith, but I dare not say so, because I would fasten upon Him a kind or measure of responsibility regarding my dimness. The dimness is mine, the glory is His. Do not blame what little light I have, and say, You professed to be a light, and yet are sometimes almost totally eclipsed. I know it, my heart knows it; I repent of it; I may not have been able to make the light any brighter, but I could have kept the lamp a little cleaner; do not blame my Lord, the blame is not His; blame the poor sinning creature; I got wrong, not through my religion, but through my want of it. Oh, let the Lord go free, and do not bind Him with nails to another cross. Were His Church

really alive with this faith, and if the Church really believed that Jesus Christ is not only author but finisher of faith, we should soon have a new Church. We have churches enough, but they are all such small nutshells they cannot hold enough for any man to drink. We are living in too small and cobwebby a corner, and we are almost afraid of one another, and we communicate with one another through the medium of a third party. We are not responsive to the offer of faith; we might have had more faith and better faith. Why not begin now that we have come together again after what has been to me a long and weary separation—why not get into the root of things? Why not bring all our books together that are of a merely creedal and external character, and burn them in some public market-place, and begin again? On our side, if we be true men, the author and finisher of faith stands; both His hands are full, He offers the largess of His blessing. Why not be young men again? We are not dealing with a Christ who came into history at a certain point; He is the maker of history. We are not indebted to history for the revelation of the Son of God; He was in the world and the world knew Him not. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word became worlds, and became flesh, and became spirit. Through all these, from end to end, from dawn to temporary sunset, there shines the wondrous Trinity.

Thus I begin my poor ministry amongst you once more. It is a great theme that has engaged our attention for the first moment of our reunion. Do not imagine that when one man goes down in faith therefore faith itself is shattered. Do not suppose that an apostate wrecks the Church. No more let us say that such and such a lapse is enough to destroy the Church. That foolish suggestion was anticipated and destroyed by the Lord. Speaking of His Church, He said, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." If all the ministers were to collapse and all influences that we reckon good and healthy were to suffer loss or to go out of existence, Jesus would still triumph. Hear me: He is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham, and if we all left Him His kingdom would still go on. He shall see of the

travail of His soul and be satisfied. He does not depend upon my faith or your faith, He is the author and finisher of faith, and as for His enemies, He will dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.

I may say, beginning a new series, that we rely wholly upon the love of our friends for the support of this whole place and all that it means. That is a wonderful thing. "You have a great endowment?" Not a penny. "You have a large subsidy from the State?" I never heard of it. "But you have a great somebody somewhere who keeps you going?" Give me his address, if you please, I never heard of him. No, it is a question of love, voluntary will. And so in announcing the weekly offering I leave it with this interpretation to your hearts and in your hands.

We are glad to see one another again. I think I see signs that this Thursday morning service is by the blessing of God going to take a new lease of life. What is it that abides? It is the Gospel. I have never preached upon collisions, earthquakes, great railway accidents, or even upon general elections. I have let the opportunity go by with great thankfulness. I see that they are calling one another liars, pretenders, hypocrites; and they are just as bad on one side as on the other, and I propose to have nothing to do with either of them. I will endeavour, God helping me, to preach the truth, to lay down great principles, to elevate and sanctify human conduct, and then the result will be seen in the practical life of the nation. Let that be so. I am in some degree ashamed of people who can call one another liars and pretenders and hypocrites. O what a time the devil must be having! I will ask you to go into the sanctuary, the place of peace and love, and remembering all the joy we have had together these more than thirty-one years, I will ask you to stand up and sing, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the full blessing of the Divine Heart, be with us, till we see the Author and Finisher of faith! Amen.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou wilt not disdain our thanksgiving, because we bring it to Thee by way of the Cross. We come in the name of Jesus Christ Thy Son with our song and psalm, the sigh of our sorrow and the shout of our gladness. It is all through Christ and by Christ and for Christ's sake. We have come to sing of Thy goodness, for truly we should be unthankful if we did not recognise the hand of the Lord in all our daily life. Thou hast beset us behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon us; we are of consequence to Thee, for though fallen and sore bruised, we were once made in Thine own image and likeness. We own the terrible fall; truly we have broken Thy law and dishonoured Thy love and treated Thy covenant as of none effect; we have done the thing that we ought not to have done. We will day by day witness against ourselves; yea, though we might boast amongst ourselves we cannot boast before God. Measuring ourselves by ourselves, we are of some account, but, looking at ourselves in the light of Thy holiness, who may open his mouth in the hearing of God? We will say, God be merciful unto us, sinners. We are sinful altogether, and we do not fully know it; may we now receive the light of Thy revelation upon our inmost character, motive, and purpose, that we may see how vile we are and how much to be scorned of God. Sin is the abominable thing which Thou dost hate, and we sin every day, not knowing wholly how much we sin; but God is judge, He knows all; the Lord knows our birth and our bringing-up and the habits which have influenced us, and the temptations which have borne upon us, and the terrible assaults which have been made upon the very citadel of our lives. God pity us! We are broken reeds, we are liars before God; if we have kept the letter, we have violated the spirit. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: may we have one vision of it to-day, that we may mourn our sin, and in broken-heartedness whilst lying and trembling at the foot of the Cross receive some token of forgiveness through the blood of the Lamb. We come before Thee in various estates and conditions of life, mind, character, service, and the like; yet are we all one before Thee; Thou knowest the root, Thou dost search the depths of the heart, Thou knowest all things. We fear Thine eyes, and yet we desire them to be fixed upon us; we still brokenly love Thee. Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that even in our waygoing and falling and backsliding we still have a longing, lingering desire to see our Father. Thou

hast redeemed us with blood, Thou hast poured upon mankind the blessing of the Holy Ghost ; now we would enter into the fulness of the blessing of the covenant, and see God as it were face to face. We have come to think of Jesus ; His blood cleanseth from all sin ; He does not cleanse us officially and externally, He cleanses us by His blood in the innermost parts of the soul. It is for this cleansing we long, we pant for holiness. Some are full of joy, they are singing in their hearts and making melody unto the Lord ; they see nothing but green fields and beauteous flowers, and they hear all the birds that sing in the air, and they think that life will be one long summer morning. Others are quite broken-hearted ; there is nothing worth living for, all roads lead to nothingness and disappointment, every cup has an element of bitterness in it, and all life is all darkness. And some are young and young-hearted ; and some are old yet do not feel the burden of their years, because Thou hast blessed them in basket and in store and greatly enlarged their dwelling-place. And some are sad and silent because they do not know what the boys are doing in the far-away country. And some are sad because others are dying, and they have had no news of them this morning, and their plagued imagination wonders about the suffering and the sorrow and the possible passing away. Yet Thou knowest us altogether, Thy sunshine is common to us all, we are all out on the open air of Thy blessing, and bathed in the sunshine of Thy love, and even those who are sick and sore of heart have at least tried to sing.

The Lord hear us ; the Lord search us and judge us,—but let it be at the Cross. Amen.

CVII.

SPIRITUAL CHARACTER.

“For I know nothing by myself ; yet am I not hereby justified : but He that judgeth me is the Lord.”—I COR. iv. 4.



THE apostle has been talking of judgment, and he has plainly said, “With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment : yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself”—against myself, as between man and man, “yet am I not hereby,” through that simple fact, “justified,” or made just ; the fact is we have nothing to do with judgment ;

"He that judgeth me is the Lord." How calm he was, how almost defiant when face to face with social or hostile criticism! How heart-searching he was; how thoroughly this man grips every case that he deals with! There is no escaping his iron handling. He is the kind of man to follow when we do not quite know what to do with some things. He is so courtly, so learned in the deepest laws, so profoundly human. Yet there is about him such mystery and gladness of unexplained divinity.

How may the text be paraphrased? "I know nothing by myself; if you were to ask me what are my social faults as between man and man, I really should be unable to tell you; I do not know that I have wronged any man, or befouled any reputation, or made it very hard for any other man to live; I am not malicious; if you, therefore, were to put me to it as before the human magistrate, I know nothing of myself by myself against myself; I think my standing in society is good, I owe no debt, I want to avenge no wrong, I want to be kind, civil, and helpful to everybody. Yet this does not make me right; we must go to another court for that judgment. If I am speaking to you Corinthians or Romans or Galatians, I stand erect and challenge your criticism. Yet I am not hereby justified, right, right in the deep and true sense. I am socially right, conventionally right, I can meet any man in the street and hail him in the name of civility, ay, and challenge him in the name of hostility; but this does not make me right." For want of knowing that the earth is sick of sin; we cannot drive people to the superior and inner court; they will not enter there, they are afraid of the spiritual presence. Outside an hour ago this same man was challenging everybody to produce everything against him. So far, so good, but only socially good. You are not made right, and you are not really right, simply because you can challenge your neighbours to bring anything against you. That is nothing if it be all.

We are not to judge ourselves as others see us, but as we really, interiorly, spiritually are. Who then can stand? None. That is the whole mystery; if men would believe that one little sentence we should see

new heavens and a new earth, if they acted upon the vision, and were obedient to the heavenly revelation. We see one another externally; we think we are nice men. Oh the lie! It is because we fail just there that we need no Cross. As to our own self-gratulation, boasting, and vain pride, we do everything conventionally well; we pay our debts, we exchange social courtesies, and we conduct ourselves generally so that our neighbours say about us we are nice, agreeable, respectable people. Oh if they knew, really knew! They hear our words, they do not see the evolution of our thoughts; they see our social antics, and call them nice manners; they do not know the desire that follows the devil as if it would hug him and drink his very blood that it may be strong in unholiness. Some people have a very good local reputation. What! We live on references! Think of it, and stand aghast. So long as we are dealing with merely social and superficial manners, a reference may be good enough, but we want more than references, we want reality, character, spiritual, metaphysical character, the character that is another word for holiness. Nor are we to be content with ourselves as we see our own life and outward reputation and character. It is not what we see, it is what God sees. Oh the misery! Then is there no peace for me? None; there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. Not because God has armed Himself against wickedness, but because wickedness itself is so wicked that it takes revenge upon its own triumphs. You cannot do evil without going immediately to hell: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"—not to-morrow, but to-day; ere the damning drink has passed through thy throat, even then when the last bubble has broken, death has set in. That is so along the whole line of evil; death standeth at the door. The moment you spoke that cruel word, lie, or slander, you felt the icy breath of death on your soul. You hated yourself, you went to the barrel for your relief, and your intoxication became a second death. *

Not what we see of ourselves. We make ourselves coats and clothing of fig leaves, and we hide up all that is foul or unlovely in our sight and in the sight of other men. But no man can destroy

his own sin. If any one could be persuaded to believe that—not merely to nod assent to that, but to believe it—there would go up out of this nation such a cry for the Gospel as would make a new nation of it. Concealment of sin is not destruction of sin; momentary forgetfulness of sin does not quench one cinder in hell. It is sin, sinful sin, the abominable thing which God hates, and which can only be really cleansed out of the soul by the hot heart-blood of the Priest of the universe. Poor preachers ! they can make no headway, they are losing ground, simply because people think of reputation, not of character ; of the conventional, not the spiritual ; of anything that will pass muster without anything being said about it. So long as our congregations are made up of such living fallacies the gospel of salvation by blood has a poor chance. We judge one another by the largeness of our house, the sumptuousness of our fare, the lavishness of our hospitality ; we judge ourselves and others by the clothes we wear. Sometimes I am tempted in a fit of gathering despair to give up the Book and the Church and the lying folks and my lying self. We do not get at roots, protoplasms, first films and skins of things ; and as for the walls we have mended, we have daubed them with untempered mortar, and they will fall.

We know what all this means in the affairs of science and commerce and continual intercourse as between client and customer, debtor and creditor. "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer," and when he goes away he chuckles as only a liar can chuckle, and goes to church and drinks the red blood, and says who are orthodox. The sadness of it drives me mad ! Surely I cannot bear it much longer, surely I must put the knife to my own spiritual life ; it is such a lie. If you go to some people to give you an estimate or appreciation of this or that article, they will wisely take it to the microscope. That microscope is a kind of divinity in matter ; it is a searcher of qualities ; it is a hunter of flaws ; it is a revealer of signs. Come, tell me, thou blind man, what thinkest thou of this ? He says it looks well. What is thy qualification for judgment ? art thou sharp-eyed ? No, I am rather

failing in sight ; if I had my better spectacles I think I could see it a little more clearly. Away ! a character judged through spectacles ! Doctor, what is my case ? I feel such and such symptoms ; tell me, please, how the case stands. Immediately he applies the stethoscope to his ears, and the one end of it to my heart ; and I say to him, You do not want an instrument of that kind, man ; surely by looking at me or laying your hand upon me you will understand the case. He replies, I must use this instrument, I can hear through the stethoscope what I cannot hear without assistance. That is just what the apostle Paul has been talking about. He says, I am not justified because I think I am right in regard to such and such relations ; I must have the aid of the spiritual stethoscope, which will tell me what valvular disturbance there is in the heart, what murmuring, and what is the meaning of that fluttering. Yet when we tell our hearers—poor preachers !—that they can only see through the stethoscope of the Bible, through the mirror of revelation, and by all the aids spiritual and transcendental which divinity has supplied, they call it superstition. Can fools be saved ? We have often spoken together of the difference between the mechanical and the chemical cleansing of a vessel. We are familiar with what men of science have told us about this. We have seen the vessel, and it has been declared to us by competent mechanical authorities that it is perfectly clean. The witness is here, let the witness be examined. The testimony of the witness runs thus : I cleaned it, I thoroughly cleaned it, I cleaned it with boiling water, I spared no pains, I certify on oath that this vessel is clean. Now let the chemist be called, and we will hear him upon the vessel : It is not clean, it must have another cleansing, yea, it must have another kind of cleansing ; what the first witness said is perfectly true ; so far as mechanical ministry and aid may be regarded, the vessel is as clean as hands can make it, but it must be cleaned chemically, by acids, by a touch that the mere mechanic cannot give. That is exactly the text. We own this in the market-place, we walk by it in the retreats of chemistry and science, but when it comes to spiritual matters we call it superstition. Thou wicked servant, out of thine own mouth will I judge

thee. Do you think this wall that we are gazing upon is quite perpendicular? Yes, I should say so; I have no difficulty in giving it as my opinion that the wall is perpendicular. Now I call to my servant or colleague, and I say, Bring the plumb-line. You do not need any plumb-line, says the man who has given the judgment; I can see by the naked eye that it is straight. And I repeat to my colleague or assistant, Bring the plumb-line. The plumb-line comes up from eternity, the plumb-line cannot be blind, the plumb-line tells no lies; let that ounce of lead at the end of the string have time to get into repose, and now what will you say about the perpendicularity of the wall? And the reply is, I certainly should not have thought it was so much out of plumb; I must admit that I was wrong. It is even so that the apostle Paul would have us judge the wall of our life, the wall of our character. He says, To the naked eye everything seems right and well adapted, but bring the plumb-line. What is the plumb-line? The Book. What book? God's Book. Now what do you say about the wall of your character, the wall of your life, and the wall of your habits? As you yourself may say, I never could have thought it. Precisely so; that is the test of revelation; we never could have thought this or that about ourselves until such and such a revelation was made to us, and in after life we proved the revelation to be true. That is what the apostle Paul means in effect when he says, I know nothing by myself against myself; looked at by the naked eye I seem to be all right, but that does not make me right; I am not hereby justified; he that judgeth me is the Lord; I must go into the innermost sanctuary to find out what I am, and I must go into the innermost court of the Lord's own justice, presided over by Himself, to know what my prayers are worth; they may be lies.

So we are face to face with the great doctrine of spiritual character; what we are in motive, in purpose, in our heart of hearts, that is the question. O thou who dost boast of thy good reputation amongst neighbours, and empty thy pockets of testimonials to prove how respectable a man thou art, that is not the question. It is, What are we in the sight of white

light, what are we in the sanctuary? Who can stand? None. What then? Penitence, self-renunciation, an earnest, piercing cry to the heavens for mercy, a clinging round the Cross. We are cursed by being satisfied with mere respectability. Respectability now takes the place of spiritual criticism. We do not refer to God, we refer to man. If a man with a thousand a year can testify that I am a respectable person, I care for nothing else; you know my referee, this is what he says about me. And socially, conventionally, that is true; spiritually and interiorly it is a lie; take it back, burn it.

Then we come face to face with the great doctrine of regeneration. Marvel not that I say unto you, Ye must be born again; except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. He must be born again without explanation, though he is a very intelligent creature. God is continually snubbing intelligence; God is often ordering mere knowledge off the doorstep of His palace. He does not want knowledge, intelligence, criticism, or anything of that kind, separately, independently, and by itself, so to say, but he wants the outgoing desire of the heart, the longing of the soul, the cry in the dark, Oh that I knew where I might find Him! The Gospel has a great broad, clear, trumpet-like answer to that inquiry. We see Jesus crucified, and we see Jesus crowned. That is God's answer. Then let us cease comparison with others and let us make every day a day of judgment upon ourselves. As for others, judge not that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged, with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again. Look upon your own heart. That is the exhortation which comes to me from heavenly places every day, and if I obey it I shall have so much to do with my own faults that I shall have no time left to make remarks on the faults of another man.

This being the first Sunday of the month, we always think of the poor when we make our usual collection. The collection for the poor of our own particular church we will make at this table. We will now give generally to the church, and specially

to some instances of poverty. I have had a friend staying with me some time, and declaring that he never knew what it was to have so many applications from the poor. He did not know there were so many poor people with good clothes on. These are the poor I like to help. Oh that tippet that has been shaken so often, that old, old mantle that has to do both for summer and winter! Oh that look into the coal-cellar to see if the coals will last a little longer. To the so-called poor on the streets I give nothing, but oh the pocketful of letters! And that is where I am influenced in my estimate of people giving at the collections. You do not know who is sitting next you; perhaps a person who has had no breakfast, and yet looks so respectable. I heard a man say to me in my own vestry, "I was surprised to see how many people allowed the box to pass by." Said I, "When you are as old as I am, and have visited as many poor people as I have, you will form a gentler judgment." It is a strange life, a big tragedy, with streaks of blood on it. The offering will now be taken.

Some of you are from distant places. I want you to remain to this double service. Kindly send to me your names and the names of the towns you come from that I may know something of the constitution of the assembly at the Sacrament. Kindly send those names before the Sacrament is observed. I will not say administered, as if one man were doing something for the other man. We meet on the common ground of saved sinners.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the whole wealth of God, be lavished upon us! Amen.

SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 7TH, 1900.

Voluntary "Adagio" Mendelssohn
 Anthem 2 "I will extol Thee" Mason

The Lord's Prayer.—*Field.*

Hymn 529 "God is in His temple."

1st Lesson. Isaiah liiii. 1-5.

Chant III Psalm cxlviii. Booth

2nd Lesson. 1 Cor. xi. 23-26.

[*I want as many as can conveniently remain to unite with us in the celebration of the Lord's Supper at the close of the present service. This is the beautiful story of it all.*]

23. For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you [*and this is how it was*], That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread [*the bread that was lying there ; not special bread*]:

24. And when he had given thanks, he brake [*such a breaking, such a tearing to pieces, such a bruising!*] it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you [*"He was bruised"*]: this do [*in no mysterious and superstitious manner, but*] in remembrance of me [*the one Subject worth remembering*].

25. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped [*took what was left of the sour wine*], saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood [*in red ink!*]: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it [*fix no periods ; mine is not a mechanical religion,—"as oft as ye drink it" let it be*], in remembrance of me.

26. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death [*two words that ought never to come together*] till He come [*that is the light we have been waiting for*].

Anthem "Praise the Lord" Goss

Praise the Lord, O my soul: while I live will I praise the Lord: yea, as long as I have any being, I will sing praises unto my God. O pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls: and plenteousness within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes: I will wish thee prosperity. Yea, because of the house of the Lord our God: I will seek to do thee good. They that put their trust in the Lord shall be even as the Mount Sion: which may not be removed, but standeth fast for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people, from henceforth even for ever.

Prayer.

Hymn 299 "Whom should we love like Thee?"

Sermon.

Offertory and Solo:

"Lord God of Abraham" (*Elijah*) Mendelssohn

MR. EDGAR ARCHER.

Hymn 478 "By Christ redeemed, in Christ restored."

Benediction and Threefold Amen.—*Gounod.*

Voluntary "Communion" H. Smart

Celebration of the Lord's Supper.

[*Thursday Morning, October 11th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we thank Thee for the joy that is not speakable ; we bless Thee for the gospels that cannot be uttered, that would be unlawful to utter in so cold and grey an air as this. We bless Thee for the delicacies for which there are no words, the music for which no instrument fit for its utterance has yet been made. We bless Thee for the ineffable, the sanctuary of speechlessness, where we are glad with a silent joy, a wondrous heavenly dumbness. May we dwell much in this experience, may we live in this higher air by the Spirit of the living God, in transport, and ecstasy and transfiguration, till the time come when we must descend to heal and go on with the work of human healing. We bless Thee for the secret things that are Thine and shall one day be ours ; Thou wilt keep nothing from those who love Thee. They are only secret because the time has not come for their revelation ; we shall catch all the morning glory, including the jewel—the morning star. Help us to be patient, wakeful, yet watching, expecting the Lord every moment, and saying unto ourselves, The Lord will suddenly come to His temple. If we might live in such high communion with Thee we should take up the isles as a very little thing, and carry the mountains and find them not burdensome. Oh that we might live the higher life, the diviner joy, that we might taste the wine of immortality and rise up in its strength more than conquerors ! Wilt Thou through the power of the Cross, through the ever-pleading blood of Christ that has no words but a great look of love, help us to attain the heights heavenly that we may come down again and do the earthly works without feeling their wearisomeness. There is no monotony in love, there is no giving way when the heart is stayed upon God. Amen.

CVIII.

THE UNUTTERABLE.

"The Song of songs."—Sol. i. i.



HERE is a great deal of the Bible in this short expression. Some people are so familiar with it that they never think about it; they take it as a commonplace. Some people take the sunrise as a commonplace; therefore their lives are very small and poor and empty. In the spirit of this text, this is a very large Biblical expression. It contains a kind of philosophy of language. In every instance which I shall cite the speaker is trying to express something that cannot be expressed. That is his difficulty; he thinks he is going to rise to the occasion, but it is not in man to rise to such great heights. It is sometimes so with the thought of the speaker as well as with his language. There are many passages of Scripture which I hope to touch on by and by in which the thinker comes to a dead stop, and never finishes his sentence; he waves off the hearer or the reader, as who should say, There, that is all I can tell you; I have much more to say, but I am for the moment stupefied and blinded by the exceeding glory. When we think with such men we are well rewarded; they are great speakers, great teachers indeed, and we are none the worse for such speakers and readers being unable to tell us what they began to tell us and hoped to tell us, but could only point at. Meantime let us begin at the lower level, at the speechlessness of some thoughts. Language is driven to desperation, language becomes angry with itself; language and thought have never had a truly happy time of it all their wedded life. Thought has always been chiding language; language has always been complaining that it is being over-driven. Thought shakes off language with a kind of

half grateful contempt. I can imagine the musician being so thoroughly transfigured and transformed into music itself that he would break his instrument, dash it to pieces, as incapable to tell the story which he wished to breathe through it.

“The Song of songs”—the Song that holds all other songs and makes them poor; the Song that has in it all the notes and all the gamut and all the instruments and all the vocal miracles, with something added. It is that *plus* quantity that puzzles the algebra of the Church. You say you have heard a lovely song, but this Song smiles in a kind of gracious sneer, as who should say, You have heard a lovely song?—if you could have heard the Song that fills me with rapture and ecstasy and holy transport, you could never speak of your poor little song. What is there in that Song more than in mine? There is more in my Song than tongue can tell or sing; there is more in one note of my Song than in the whole of thy poor anthem. We know such moments in the song of the soul, when we want higher utterance and purer, stronger tones and tenderer, to tell all the secret of the untellable affection. All this is difficult to understand in words. We sometimes wonder what the raving preacher can mean. So people wondered about the Apostle Paul when he came back from the heavens, the third heaven, and the seventh heaven, and began to speak in an unknown tongue, though it was only our mother tongue sanctified, sublimated, and carried to its highest point of transfiguration; and the people said concerning these great apostolic preachers, They ranted or raved, and to hear them talk was not at all like preaching. Some people only understand that which they have been told from their babyhood, and which they have never questioned because they have never believed.

Now take another instance which goes well with “Song of songs,” “Holy of holies,” of which we read in Exodus xxvi. 33. In the Authorised Version it is “the most holy,” in other places it is “the Holy of holies,” as, “the Song of songs,”—the upper holiness, the holiest holiness, the holiness that has got rid of the flesh, dropped the accursed body into its proper place,

the grave, and got away where every shining star is a chorister, and all the silent heavens are only silent because they have no medium worthy of the purpose of their music. We have often said that many people are at church who are not in it. There are very few people in church on any Lord's day. The census people come and count them one by one. As if anybody believed in any aspect of the census! The pews were full, but not the church. Many men are in church who have never seen the Lord. They do not go to church to see God; why they go probably in many instances they know not. How then can any one understand this fight for utterance, this fight for breath? You have seen some poor dying friend panting for breath; the breath is clipped away, he cannot retake it and use it again, and there goes on a heavy, sad panting for breath. It is the same with spiritual language. Who can adequately express the holiness of holiness? Who can say beyond what is already known—a still whiter whiteness? There language dies, there the instrument is broken, for it cannot tell the music.

In the Bible, language is often sorely put to it. There are many unfinished sentences as well as unfinished thoughts in the Bible. I have never known language, so to say, so cruelly put to it as in the Bible. All the most musical language is in the Scriptures, yet here and there and again, yea, and oftentimes, language seems to beg the speaker not to drive at such a pace. Do you know any instance in which language was so sorely put to it as in Deut. x. 17?—"The Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God." And the sound is still more sorely breathed and panting in the Hebrew, "Jehovah your Elohim is Elohai of the Elohim and Adonai of the Adonhim, a great El." Poor language! We learn a good deal from the things we do not understand. There is such an instrument in education as impression as well as instruction. We are not to be too severe upon people who cannot remember the words which the preacher or teacher used. Such people may not remember the words, but they remember the impression. They say, There was a thick dew on the soul last night. Take it up and show it to me. No, that would be impossible, no

man can gather dew; when he has gathered it into his vessel it has ceased to be dew. Many people are taught and helped and stimulated by impressions; the music thrilled them, the speaker's rapture caught them up in its holy ecstasy, and they heard things without words, songs speechless, and they will be the better for these things all their days. Yet there are some troublesome people—created no doubt for a Divine if not for a beneficent purpose—who go away and say, I enjoyed it very much at the time, but when I came to take it to pieces, when I came to turn it over in my mind, I did not seem to recollect much. Whose blame is that? In a sermon there are two parts, the preacher and the hearer. Moreover, we may be blessed without having caught many of the words, in any connected and so-called constructive form, but we expressed ourselves thus, and we were right: Lo, God is in this place, and I knew it not; this is none other than the house of God, this is the gate of heaven. Jacob was then in the Holy of holies, the dream out of which all other dreams are struck. He was under an influence that is back of all history, the secret of all inspiration, the renewal of all holiest strength. They go well together, these two short texts. "The Song of songs," "the Holy of holies"—the thrilling soprano, and the solemn bass. They are well matched; they point to their meaning.

The apostle would seem to be in something of the same difficulty many times, notably in Romans xi. 36, "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things." Paul was often short of words. He said, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far—more—exceeding—and eternal—weight—of glory." Even then he had not touched the giddy point of the climax, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Stand forth, you black enemies of the soul! "Neither life, nor death, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come," nor any other things that ever troubled the dreams of the soul: I despise you all; go back, a conquered crew! There are some persons who have what is termed a nice gift of language. That is one of the small things I am always afraid of. I want sometimes thoughts that no words

dare come near. I do not object to my preacher sometimes stumbling for lack of words; I feel not for him, but with him in that Gethsemane. Oh the love of Christ!—the height, the length, the breadth, the depth, and if there are any more dimensions, name them one by one, and still you will leave that ineffable magnitude unexplained.

There are other cases which match “the Song of songs” and “the Holy of holies”; notably one in 1 Kings viii. 27—a word that has often lifted me up out of the dust—“The heaven and heaven of heavens.” They are not mere Hebraisms. When a man built his little pillar, we think he only put a number of stones together, but the Hebrew says he “pillared a pillar.” It was a pillar before he began; there was a pillar in the soul before there was a pillar on the ground. And “heaven and heaven of heavens” simply represents language at its weakest. Who knows what heaven is? Take of it what little your imagination can lay hold upon, and treasure it; it is no matter what you think so long as you think of heaven in connection with God, holiness, service, rapture. Sometimes we are quite right, though our poetry limps and our syntax staggers. If we heard a man say “heaven and the heaven of heavens,” we should be surprised, but he is on the right road, because he thinks of heaven as a city in which there is no sin, no hatred, no night, no death, neither shall there be any more pain. He has been told by some sweet creature that in heaven they hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither doth the sun light on them, nor any heat; he takes hold of that idea, and it ought never to be taken away from him; it is a somewhat material image of an immaterial fact and experience. My dear fellow wounded soul, take hold of that idea until it shines with a more perfect light and we come to a truer realisation of the city whose streets are gold, whose walls are jasper. Do not give up your initial and primary ideas until you see what else you are going to receive instead of them. The Bible will give you a good help to be going on with, and it will conduct you into the heaven and the heaven of heavens. Enough! wait! the messenger may be at the door.

Now what are some of the useful inferences that follow from this collation of marvellous instances of speechlessness? Our limitations. Our own mother tongue refuses to go beyond a certain point. We goad it, and it will not answer; we turn it variously into measure and rhythm and cadence, but it has its limit, and it will not go one single stride beyond it. Yet it is our mother tongue; we were brought up in it, we learned our earliest speeches in it, we talked our first love talk in that mother tongue; but he says to us, Lo, hitherto I can come, but no further; I might myself be willing to carry up your thought to some further distance, but I cannot. Yet there are some people who will only believe what they can write down, and what they can interpret by some helpful lexicon. Why do we not imitate the men whose example we shall quote in some early discourse, I trust, who come to the brink, and, coming to the very edge of their limitation, look over, and stand back? They have seen the otherwise invisible; they have seen the ghost that chatters them back into their proper cage. Not only so, we do not merely see our limitations and become humbled by them, but we have quickened the consciousness that there is something beyond, something more, a *plus* quantity,—I saw it, I know it! How? I cannot tell; yet I know it. We know without words, by instinct, intuition, a marvellous inward spiritual ministry which we cannot explain, which is always telling us, What you know not now you shall know hereafter; wait, do your work lovingly, intelligently, sympathetically, and work till the last beam of the sun withdraws from the field and you can hardly see the furrow you have been ploughing. There is something more; let that be a balm to you. This world is not all; the air is full of farewells, but it is also full of salutations and benedictions. God may for one flashing moment let you see the face and allow you just time enough to be sure of its identity, and you will come away from that vision-land to sing some sweet old hymn of the time gone and the time that is coming.

We have analogies of all this. (*a*) In "time." We have a phrase which I do not think any man invented.

When he wants to tell you how much time there is he cannot, he babbles, he stumbles, he is like a child in a gasping, panting hurry, and he says, It will be "for ever and ever." What sort of talk is that? No man can understand it; it overpowers the imagination. Yet when you are speaking, not about religion as it is technically understood, but about some great and solemn, yea, some joyous experience, you say, It will endure "for ever,"—is that not long enough?—"and ever." How much longer is that? Do not heed the mere vocables; they are trying to express the inexpressible and to hold up your heart with a great promise that one day time will be gone and the unbroken eternity will surge around you. (b) We have it also in "space." There are un-touchable heights, unattainable sublimities. You measure your ceiling, but you cannot measure the sky; painters' colour you can say much about, but the azure, who can speak of with adequate intelligence? (c) You have it not only in time and in space, but in "love"—the unutterable love—such as you talk to the baby. Are you quite aware that you talk ungrammatically to the baby? Why do you not talk a truly technical syntax to the baby that is lying in your heart? Why that cooing and babbling and altogether untranslatable verbiage, punctuated with hugs, illuminated by smiles—a marvellous telepathy that the baby seems to understand at the other end? What does it mean? It means the blessed life, the life that will be not at the first only, but at the last, away beyond all calculated duration, saying something to one another without the lips moving, heart talking to heart, throb answering throb, a marvellous ministry of mutual life and masonry.

Then all is gathered up in the Christ—always. Did Solomon say "The Song of songs"? I hear another Voice greater than Solomon, saying, "King of kings, Lord of lords." And they mingle well, these great surges of song—Song of songs, Holy of holies, Heaven of heavens, King of kings, Lord of lords. And what voice was that I heard between? It was a voice that spake of "joy unspeakable." Poor language! we thank thee for all thy little messages; they stumbled and hesitated a good deal, but still they were messages that

did our hearts good ; we thank thee for some uplifting and thrilling sermons which the speaker himself knew nothing about, for he spake under the ministry of the Holy Ghost, and we received good, not at his hands, but at Thine, Thou mighty Giver of all speech. And as for our joy, it is unspeakable, it is rapture, it is ecstasy, it is a great hallelujah that fills the heaven and the heaven of heavens. Beware of those little creatures who can tell you all that is in them ; cleave to those who finish their largest utterances by saying, I have many things to tell you, but ye cannot bear them now.

I have had a letter, which I receive annually, asking me in the name of this church to renew our subscription to the funds for the poor connected with an adjoining parish. I have a letter from the clergyman of that parish, and without consulting you, I sent him £2 out of the offering which will now be taken.

May I say that a verbatim report of the whole service has been taken and will in due time appear in " The City Temple Pulpit " ? I cannot say when ; I know nothing about that whatever. I deliver the sermon, and I never see it again, and I never want to see it. I correct nothing, I alter nothing—substantially speaking, nothing. The thing has been spoken after prayer for the right words ; let it go. If there are blunders in the reporting, which I question very much, I hope they are large ones. I have never any fear of a great blunder ; I have a great dread of little blunders—the little foxes which spoil the grapes. And if ever any of you young speakers make a blunder in your speech, do not go back to correct it. Never go back for any purpose, unless you are almost driven back by an agency you cannot control. I make these explanations about the sermons because people write to me to ask when will such and such a sermon appear, in what number will it appear, how long have I to wait for this and that. You know just as much as I do. But I should think the people who take in all the sermons will get the one they want. (Laughter.) Oh the joy of being amongst you again (applause), of resuming the Thursday morning service. I do not know whether

I ought to be this or that, but when I go into the country it is almost always the Thursday morning service that is referred to. Blessed be God for such an opportunity of attempting in His name to do good!

Benediction.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the companionship and comfort of the Holy Ghost, be with us, telling the heart those things which cannot be told by mere words. Amen.

SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 21ST, 1900.

2 Peter iii. 8-11.

8. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing [*it is often one thing that determines everything. The thing you have to remember is*], that one day [*count it as you will*] is with the Lord as a thousand years [*that is to say, any number of years*], and a thousand years as one day. [*That is where you have gone wrong so seriously in reading the first chapter of the Book of Genesis. The one thing you ought to have remembered is the one thing you have forgotten.*]

9. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness [*self-appointed timekeepers*]; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish [*whatever may become of the chronometer, the time-measurer : saith He, Another thousand years !*], but that all should come to repentance.

10. But the day of the Lord [*the day that has no night*] will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

11. Seeing then that all these things [*however great and grand they may seem*] shall be dissolved [*turned back into nothingness*], what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation [*citizenship*] and godliness. [*You should alter the whole standard of measurement and weight, and do away with the old arithmetic.*]

[*Sunday Morning, October 14th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

GREAT is Thy power, and Thy wisdom is infinite, but we will sing of Thy mercy and talk of Thy love all the day. God is love; this we know through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we approach Thee without trembling or fear. We will think of the Cross; of the blood that was shed for sin; we will think of the harvest-fields, and the greater harvest of Calvary. We bless Thee for all Thy goodness towards us; it has been indeed a great goodness undeserved by us, but yet needed by our hunger and by our whole necessity. Thou hast kept back no good thing from us; yea, where we could not understand Thee Thy love was sweetest. We say so in the spirit of prophecy and in the spirit of faith, though now we cannot see it to be such. What revelations Thou hast yet in store for us; how Thou wilt explain the dark things; how Thou wilt turn the mysteries into jewels; how the nights shall be our best days; and how the things we cannot understand shall become the beginnings of our sweetest hymns. We always think of Thee with wonder, sometimes we attain to the eminence of love; now and again occasionally in this poor weird life we fall into rapture and adoration and desire to join the angels. We are so bewildered because we are so small; we cannot see the further ends of things, we do not hear the final amen, but we are groping, struggling, stumbling, and waiting for that concluding and crowning word. We bless Thee that we have any desire to be in Thy house. Once we cared not for Thy sanctuary, and we named Thine altar upon cold lips, but now we love the place of Thine appearing and the house of Thy regard, and now we desire the gates to be opened to us at the earliest hour, that we may come in with the dawn and tarry till the time of the evening star. We bless Thee for these aspirations, for these poor desires after holiness; we have not yet attained, we know how far back we are in the race, and how defective in the struggle, but the very desire to be better makes us better by Thy grace as revealed and glorified in the Cross. Now and again we come back to the altars which we built at the first, we ask for the old paths, we inquire for the altars of the ancient time. Now and again we get tired of newness, we long for the solemn, silent eternity.

Sometimes we long with our hearts' whole longing till the longing becomes a burning to hear again that Jesus died for us and rose again. We have been tempted to run away from these truths, men have offered us seductions in many forms, and for a time we have run after them and wasted our lives; then comes the blessed time, the Sabbath in the middle of the week and the strife and the tumult, and there comes upon our hearing the wondrous music, "Free grace and dying love." It is the old sacrament; at Thy table we find what nourishment the soul needs. Lord, may there be no lack of harvest in the soul, may we have grand reaping times in the best and wise sense, may we pull down our barns and build greater, yea, that we may store food, the gift of Thine hand for the soul's hunger. Amen.

CIX.

CHRIST'S VIEW OF FAITH.

"Many believed in His name. . . . But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them."—JOHN ii. 23, 24.



YOU see the double action. How foolish we have been! We have said, Believe, and Jesus will come to you, and as it were dandle you on His knee; He will abide with you, you will have long and blessed holiday. This false doctrine has been preached too long. Let us carefully read the text, for it seems to be a text that is self-balanced. "Many believed in His name . . . but Jesus." That is strange reading; what is the meaning of that disjunctive? Surely we must have read it wrong. "Many believed in His name . . . but Jesus." When was the difficulty ever with Jesus? What has He to do with these buts and shadows and fears and sudden darkenings of the sky? It surely should have been "And Jesus." Yet it is not; we cannot change the "But"; it is a chilling word. There is more than criticism in it, that is to say, more than grammatical criticism; there is another kind of criticism in it. Criticism means judgment, criticism is not an exercise in words, in grammar, in literature in any form. Criticism in the

heart of it means insight, penetration, estimate of qualities, judgment. Let us read the text again. "Many believed in His name. . . . But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them." It is very instructive to know that the word "believed" and the word "commit," though so different in English, are the same word in the original tongue. How then may the text be varied, if not amended? "Many believed in His name. . . . But Jesus did not believe in them." To be worth anything, faith must be mutual. Faith is not an action on one side. It is not whether we believe in Christ, but whether Christ believes in us. He stands aloof from some men; they professedly adore Him, and He says, "I do not know you." In Thy name we have done many wonderful works. "I do not know you." We have made a livelihood out of Thy name, we have delivered courses of lectures upon Thee, we have gathered great congregations to hear us lecture upon Thee and upon Thy ministry. "I do not know you." "Many believed in His name. . . . But Jesus did not believe in them."

Do not let us, therefore, run away with some simple, shallow conception of what is meant by faith. Christianity is not a process of voting for Jesus, as if in the uproar and the sham of a general election. Faith means a double action. It might be expressed thus: Man believes in Jesus, and Jesus believes in the believing man. Then is the sacrament complete, the whole history is radiant with inner and outer light, and the redeemed man and the redeeming Christ walk in tender fellowship and make each other glad with a new, deep, strange gladness. How did the "many" come to believe in Him or in His name? The text tells us: "Many believed in His name when they saw the miracles which He did." Jesus will not have it, He will not have a toy salvation, He will not have a faith that is built upon mere mechanics, circumstances, and outward incidents. Faith is not an applauding of something outside and visible; faith is an outgoing of the whole soul, be the consequences what they may. Then is the soul of Christ satisfied. Jesus did not believe in them, "because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man." What man can say

this of himself? This is indeed a most marvellous and penetrating claim. What man can rise and say, so as to inspire confidence, I know all men, I do not need any testimony or certificate regarding man, I know all about him, in and out, I made him? Jesus was always so thankful for faith that one wonders He did not take anybody who in any way whatsoever seemed to believe. He did not. Do not misunderstand the Son of God. He has not gone out for numbers, He is at the bottom of the poll; He has gone out for quality. There is a majority of numbers, and there is a majority of quality.

Is this a new doctrine, that Jesus Christ does not respond to faith? It is as old as the oldest records of the redeemed Church. When was the Church redeemed? Before it was a Church. We must get into the use of holy paradoxes if we would understand the Scriptures. "This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart"—what does it matter about the heart? If the lips are singing, if there is a great noise, if there is a musical uproar, what about the heart? To God the heart is everything. "Son, give Me thine heart," and I will find a voice for thee; give Me thine heart, and I will attune thy throat to sweet music. But there must be a gift of the heart; as I have given thee My heart, so thou must give Me thine heart. Will not God stoop to accept any kind of worship? No. What sacrifice does the Lord God Almighty require? The sacrifice of sincerity, white-heartedness, frankness of true faith. Will He stoop to accept that from a king? Yes, and from the king's peasant, and the king's lowest servant. God is no respecter of persons; God abhors the sacrifice where not the heart is found. My faith then may be too little for Christ to accept? No! You will drag Him into quantities and numbers, places that He will not condescend to recognise. Not little faith, but true faith. Why, if thou hadst faith as a grain of mustard seed, thou wouldst toy with the mountains and ask the stars to stand back and make a way to the throne of God for hearts that love the light. We are not saved by much faith, we are saved by faith. Faith is a quality, not a quantity; a disposition of the soul, not

the furniture of the body. Until we get people to understand these distinctions we can make no progress. The poorest, meanest competition on the high roads will beat the Church; simply because people do not know what Church means. Any competitor, the more grotesque the better, can drive the minister of Christ out of the field, because people do not understand the soul or drink the juice of holiest words. Many people make no distinction as between one church and another. They think church is a common name and means anything that anybody chooses to signify. They never think of the false church, the church that is not a church, that has no claim to be a church. Who thinks of it? None. Then where are our young people? Away, afield, on the sea. I am glad I am nearly done with it all—O God, that it might be to-night! The fools! Do not let me go mad by sowing seed among thorns! Blessed Jesus, three years of it was enough for Thy bleeding heart.

We think we confer an honour upon God when we believe the Gospel. As a matter of fact we do nothing of the kind; it is not in our power to confer any honour. I must ask myself some searching questions. I believe, but what does believe mean? I believe in Jesus Christ, but does Jesus Christ believe in me? I would not for the world be without a piece of furniture called a pew in a church. What will that do for me? Nothing; it may rise up in judgment against me.

Suppose, then, we turn round the whole inquiry, and instead of saying, Do you believe in Jesus? we should say, Does Jesus believe in you—you whited sepulchre? That would empty the Church, and the sooner the better, if there be not the real soul-faith in us. Weakness cannot win the battle, insincerity cannot wear and usefully wear the armour of God. The man who does not draw the arrow with his soul will never smite the king.

This is no new doctrine, as another text will show. "Many will say unto Me in that day, Lord, Lord! and I will say, I know you not." This is not a new doctrine, as we may see again by the

Old Testament. Which of you—you liveried hypocrites! you have stolen the costume of the Church—which of you would open a door for nothing, which of you would light a lamp for nothing? God does not say, Behold, all these men with liveries ecclesiastical, with costumes significant of this or that theological degree or school; how happy ought I to be in My heaven because there are so many who are operating in My service! That would not be Divine talk. The Lord stops every man of us at the door, and says, Stop! would you open the door of the tabernacle of God for nothing? would you light a lamp if you were not paid for it? O Lord God of hosts, Thou wouldst by such questioning slay Thy poor Church. And the answer descends from heaven, Such a Church ought to be slain. Then others He stops and says, Receive the kiss of Mine heart, receive the pressure of Mine hand; well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, and in a very few years I will come with My golden chariot and ask thee to come up and sit beside Me that we may drive to the King's palace. God may say this to some who are last. I am told that under some circumstances the first shall be last, and the last shall be first, and it may turn out in the long run that the people who have been doing from a public point of view very little have been doing in God's point of view all that they could do, and Jesus will say of many a servant of His, She hath done what she could.

Let us therefore take both views. We might take one of the views until we were utterly depressed and discouraged, and then when we had made up our minds to gather our mantles around us and depart from the scene of trying action there might be heard a voice saying, Do not confound the good with the bad; there is a true faith, and many have it; there is a true service, and I know everyone who usefully and sincerely obeys his Lord. It is not for man to judge. Judge not that ye be not judged; I will judge; it is for Me, as divine Lord, to say which are tares and which are ears of corn; let be; at the end of the age I will assign men to coronation or to burning, as the case may be.

We are to prove our faith upward. There are many of us who have been proving our faith in a multitude of books—as if books ever proved anything! Some of us have been writing on the evidences of Christianity. My dear friends, there is only one evidence of Christianity, and that is Christ in us, helping us in the fight, sanctifying to us the bitter distress, finding for us stars in the darkness. We are issuing, in the best sense of publication, evidences of Christianity when we forgive them that are our enemies, and when we bless them that curse us. These are the evidences of Christianity. Not what some man thought a thousand years ago, and would possibly withdraw if he were alive to-day with a new civilisation round about him; but forgiveness is always the same, moral nobility is not changed or dimmed by the ages. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." The evidences of Christianity and the evidences which prove our faith upward are all contained within this blessed expression, itself a beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

How does our faith look in the eye of heaven? That is the question. Our faith is not a painted something which we hand round to be judged by the colour and by the perspective. Faith is not a drawing; it is a sacrifice, or it is nothing. When the world, as represented in Christian congregations, believes this we shall have what is called and what the prophet called a revival. At present what is there to revive? Who would die for his faith? We must come to roots, origins, realities, and deep mysteries and meanings, before we can have any real effect on the world. "God saw that it was good." He must say the same about our faith that He said about His own creation. God looked, and saw, and said, It is good; it is the right faith, it is the action of the heart that shall be crowned son of God.

Take it as if it were from the other point, and see how glorious it all is. This is gloomy reading, "But Jesus did not believe them"; let us take it in the other way, and say, And Jesus committed Himself to them, Jesus believed them. What

then ? The coming Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, and the settling down of the Godhead in the heart, and the supper time, and the supper sacrament, and the abiding, not of the body or even of the presence, but of the influence, the blessed memory, the eternal inspiration. We speak of Jesus receiving our faith, we ought to think of our receiving Christ's faith ; we should think of the beautiful picture of Jesus Christ committing Himself to us, and of us committing ourselves to Jesus Christ. It is a reciprocal or dual action. If any man believe Me, love Me ; if any man really put his soul into My keeping, I will come to him, and My Father will come, and the Spirit will come, and we will take up our abode with him. Does Jesus Christ ever go to the hypocrite ? Never. But the hypocrite sings well. Only the words. But the hypocrite has a true creed. He has no faith. Our insincerity cannot stand the fire of God, and if any man's faith cannot stand God's fire, it will be burned.

This is our harvest festival. We keep it by gratitude in the soul. These sweet flowers, these chrysanthemums, are always here, because our Christian Endeavour Society pledged itself at one particular crisis, the summing-up of my life, that that vase should never be empty. I received the pledge, it is holy unto me. But this other vase is occasional, it is a harvest token, it comes and goes with the Octobers. It is right welcome to me ; to my friend who gave it, whoever he or she may be, I say, My best thanks, and may God bless you. I am quite willing to have occasional flowers, but I always look for this flower, this must never be absent so long as I am here. But when the flower is annual or occasional, it is still poetical, and even in a sense sacramental. One ear of corn means the harvest, one violet means the spring ; but this vase on the right hand means immortality. What we give to-day is a special harvest offering. Knowing you so well after these thirty-one years, I know that every hand will be opened to give some gift to the Lord of the harvest.

I am so thankful to hear now and again from

distant places that the prayers published in "The City Temple Pulpit" have been found in many cases to be edifying and comforting. I would God all praying were done with, and that I might be called to the music of praise. And so do some of you, because your misery at home is great. But we must wait the Will that cannot err. I would rather fight than wait.

Benediction.

May the blessing of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Three in One, One in Three, abide with us, a sure proof that our faith is accepted in heaven. Amen.

SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 14TH, 1900.

Voluntary	...	...	"Andante Pastorale"	...	...	<i>Salomé</i>
Anthem 3	...		"O praise God in His holiness"	...		<i>Weldon</i>
			The Lord's Prayer.— <i>Field.</i>			
Hymn 709	...		"Sing to the Lord of harvest."			
			1st Lesson. Gen. viii. 20-22.			
Chant 84	...	...	Psalm civ.	...	...	<i>H. Smart</i>
			2nd Lesson. Matt. xiii. 36-40.			
Anthem	...	...	"I will give thanks"	...	...	<i>Barnby</i>

I will give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will speak of all Thy marvellous works. I will be glad and rejoice in Thee, yea, my songs will I make of Thy name, O Thou most Highest.—(PSALM ix. 1, 2.) The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thy hand, and fillest all things living with plenteousness.—(PSALM cxlv. 15, 16.) Great is our Lord and great is His power, yea, and His wisdom is infinite. He preserveth all them that love Him, but scattereth abroad all the ungodly. Therefore unto Him we raise hymns of glory, songs of praise. To the Father and the Son and the Spirit Three in One, honour, might and glory be, now and through eternity. Amen.

Prayer.

Hymn 708 ... "Come, ye thankful people, come."

Sermon.

Offertory and Solo:

"God is my Shepherd" *Dvorák*

Miss LUCIE JOHNSTONE.

Hymn 27 ... "For the beauty of the earth."

Benediction and Sevenfold Amen.—*Stainer.*

Voluntary "Chorus" (*Athalie*) *Mendelssohn*

[*Thursday Morning, October 18th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALmighty GOD, we thank Thee for the ears of corn ; we bless Thee for the gospel of the wheatfield. Thou dost give us bread, yea Thou hast given us the true bread which cometh down from heaven. Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life, and except we eat of Him we shall always hunger. Lord, evermore give us this bread, and may we pluck it in every form whatsoever, on the Sabbath day or upon other days ; for when we do such deeds we sanctify all time. We bless Thee for the hunger of the heart, for that inner wolf which cannot be satisfied with aught grown upon the earth ; we bless Thee for the madness which Thy grace and Thy love alone can subdue. Oh that we were hungrier still after the bread that perisheth not ! May we not pray Thee to awaken in us the appetite which only the Cross of Christ in all its deepest, broadest meaning can satisfy ? Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift ! We thank Thee for the depth which cannot be plumbed, for the heights which cannot be scaled, for all the far-off horizon lines that tell us of cities and homes far away. We come to thank Thee for all Thy love in Christ Jesus ; may we never meet without hearing something of the Son of God ; that is the satisfying Gospel, the infinite redemption ; we long to hear that music, it finds its way into the innermost chambers of the soul. Wilt Thou at this time, an hour holy to many of us, grant us a new vision of Thy glory, and grant us also to hear some new tone in the eternal music of the Gospel, and may we even now at noon-day see a light above the brightness of the sun. Amen.

CX.

TRUE LAWFULNESS.

"Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil?"—MARK iii. 4.



HIS is one of the instances of Christ's power of subtle and at first sight unperceived retort. Have you really collated into one radiant conspectus the answers of Christ to the people who wished to take Him by guile or otherwise? You would make quite a little Bible if you were to collate all those happy and even thrilling instances of Christ's power in retort, in sending back in another form that which had been flung at Him by hostile hands. He was great in asking questions, and peculiarly great in reply. His replies were always on the spur of the moment, He never took any time to consider what answer He would make to anybody. Great intellectual combatants must answer there and then; the wit must be lightning-like, or it is poor, stale, mere *brutum fulmen*—nothing at all. Do you see the retort in Christ's answer? Never were men taken prisoners so unexpectedly and completely as in such an instance as this. Everything seemed to be in their favour; they knew about the law of the Sabbath, they could be examined upon that law, and could come out of the examination with honour, but they here encounter a Man who doubles back the question upon them, and "they held their peace." That was about the only spark of wisdom there was in these foolish men. It is something to know that a sufficient answer has been returned; it is not always well to handle hot thunderbolts.

The case is very remarkable, and is not evident on the first view of it. The case is this: Jesus entered the synagogue, and there was a man there which had a withered hand, and they, the Pharisees who had made a little diversion on the subject of rubbing ears of corn in the wheatfields on a Sabbath morning,

watched Jesus whether He would heal him on the Sabbath day. What was their motive? "That they might accuse Him." It is that motive which will be taken from them, turned into a sword, and thrust back into their very souls. "And He saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And He saith unto them"—remembering the incident about the corn—"Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil?" That was His answer to their watch upon Him. He interpreted the true meaning of their watching; they wanted to get at Him, the healer, the Saviour; for the man with the withered hand they cared nothing; they had one object, and that was to destroy the healer. We are not aware that they had spoken to Him about this particular subject, but they had spoken to Him in the other instance about the Sabbath, and this immediately follows, and He says, You talk about the law, do you? Well, let us talk about the law: Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or is it lawful to do evil? You and I are doing two totally different things; I am healing on the Sabbath day, you are sneering on the Sabbath day: which is lawful?—which? That was the sword thrust into the very soul of the people who had unsheathed it. Whoever sees the other side of the case? These white-robed gentry saw only one side. How many of us see two? How many of us see both sides? How often do we exclaim to Christ and to other teachers, We never saw that before! Precisely so; but you ought to have seen before you spoke; then you would not have spoken, and then how dull you would have been! Let us get firm hold of the case. The question is about the law, no matter whether it is a law of the Sabbath or any other law, and the Pharisees were very strict on the technical interpretation of the law. They had a Sabbath day, and they wanted to guard it, and they watched Jesus Christ whilst He was doing a beneficent act. Whether it was healing the man with the withered hand, whether it was getting the poor sheep or ox out of the ditch that had fallen into it on the Sabbath day, the accident matters nothing; the principle matters everything, and is in everything to-day, and both the parties are here.

Now, said the Pharisees, here is a case: Brethren, look on; this is the Sabbath day, this is the innovator, this is the man who is turning everything upside down; now keep your eyes upon Him: if He heals this man we shall have that wherewith and whereof we can accuse Him; the case is one of extreme importance, it is of the most critical importance; if He heals this man our case is complete, and the gallows is His lot. Jesus Christ, reading their thoughts, as He is reading ours at this very moment, holding a candle over the secret places of every soul, said, You are anxious about the law; I have referred you to a remarkable case about David in the days of Abiathar, the high priest. I have told you how David did that which was not lawful for any man to do but the priests; now I see precisely what your position is: I am going to heal this withered hand; I may break your interpretation of the law, but you, by seeking to accuse Me, by cultivating a bad spirit, are breaking the eternal law of love and justice; if I am a lawbreaker, you are lawbreakers sevenfold. Who expected that reply? I may be worse than the man I am hanging at Newgate. All depends upon the point of view. I may be more drunken than the man that is being arrested and carried off to gaol, yet I may be a speaker of temperance speeches, and may carry a pledge book in my breast pocket for the use of those who need such helps. The man has the constable's hand upon his shoulder, and I have God's hand on my soul. Whoever thought of that? Precisely; but it is for want of thinking of the other side that we do such foolish things, and go to such wasteful and prodigal lengths in all directions in this poor wild life. Jesus Christ can always turn over the page and read what is on the other side of any case. In modern phrase, the Saviour might be supposed to say, Gentlemen, I know what you are thinking about; you are thinking that I am breaking the Sabbath day, breaking the law, trampling under the letter altogether; well, appearances seem to favour your view, but you are accusing Me, you are maliciously disposed towards Me, you want to put an end to My ministry; now, which is lawful, the beneficence or the malice? "But they held their peace." Jesus Christ generally brought His

enemies and opponents to peace. He said on the occasion of the woman being taken in adultery, So it may be, yes, that is the law, carry it out; only let him that is without sin cast the first stone. No man answered Him a word; coward after coward skulked away; and the whole place was left to the sinner and her Saviour. Thus Christ in many ways weeds people out, gets rid of them by processes of exhaustion; brings Himself face to face with the reality of the case, and then speaks the great word of hope, which is the word of redemption, "Go, and sin no more—sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee." He spake it with such gentleness; it was in such moments that we caught the ineffable music that made Him God. Jesus Christ conducted no little verbal debates; it never was a question of mere grammar or syntax with the Son of God; it was the case of a great philosophy, or a great revelation, a great vision or a complete regeneration, and it was by these visions and washings and cleansings and loosings from sin that He proved His deity.

Let us look into this case a little further, and see how it touches us. Learn first that a man may break the law—say, the Sabbath—in the very act of ostentatiously keeping it. That is a most marvellous thing. I may, let me repeat the searching words clearly, actually be breaking the very law which I am most ostentatiously keeping in the letter: as who should say, Look at me; I keep the Sabbath, I will not even have the blinds drawn up on this day of days; I will not eat anything that has been cooked on this particular day, I will feed myself with cold remains; I wish you to notice this; I would not on any account break the letter of the Sabbath day; and if even a child of mine were to draw up one of those blinds, I would chastise him; I am keeping the Sabbath day. You are not; you are the greatest Sabbath-breaker in the parish. That is not the way to keep the Sabbath; that is not the spirit in which the Sabbath can be kept. Look at me, friends, neighbours, and prospective clients and customers; you see how I keep the Sabbath, and you will infer what a pious man I am, and therefore a man to be trusted with all kinds of critical business, especially where the finest conscience is necessary to

a real apprehension of the case : I would not change a shilling on the Sabbath day ; if I had put a shilling into the plate, by mistake, I would hardly stop to take a sixpence out of it ; see, therefore, how I keep the Sabbath ! No, thou whited sepulchre, thou mean, impious hypocrite ; the Sabbath cannot be kept in that way. So you may be breaking the law in the very act of ostentatiously observing it. Who was it that was so scrupulous that having his sign in the window kept the Sabbath by turning it upside down, and thus more noticeably calling attention to it ? You can only keep the Sabbath in the heart, you can only keep it in penitence and in thankfulness ; it can only be kept in its own spirit, which is a spirit of peace and meekness, restfulness and love. Always beware of the creature, to whatever denomination he may belong, who calls your attention to his splendid virtues. Says one, I could not on any account do as he or she does ; my conscience would not permit me to do it ; I do not understand how such persons can really make a profession of religion. What are you doing ? You are murdering the religion you profess ; that spirit has killed your piety. Out upon all damned hypocrisy ! Christ's resurrection day cannot be kept by finding fault with the way in which other people keep it. When we enter into these deeper sympathies and realisations of the divine Spirit we shall have a cleansed world.

A man may dishonour the Bible in the very act of ostentatiously believing that every dot, every comma, is the punctuation of the almost visible Divine hand. The man who talks so really ought hardly to be condemned, because he is not within the area or sphere of judgment. I am told that some people are not responsible for their actions ; I believe that somebody has written an elaborate paper upon the responsibility of criminal lunatics. Therefore we ought, as Jude exhorts us, to have compassion on some, making a difference. They may mean it well, they may think they are doing it conscientiously, but there are many ill-fed and ill-bred and ill-trained consciences. You may be discrediting and disabling the very book which you are superficially supposed to be honouring. Now the man is in the man. When shall we make a thorough study of involution and

mplication? I mean the whole business of folding things up and unravelling them to find the thing which has been secreted in the folds. We must so treat all the revelations of God. The hand is not the man. Would you call the glove the hand? No more is the hand the soul. Say you, "We buried her." Who buried her? She was never buried. She! You may have buried the glove, the hand, the outside framework, the frail perishable tenement, but she, the soul, the look, the touch, the music, you never buried. So it is with God's book. Whatever criticism may have done—and probably there are not a dozen men in Europe who are capable of deciding how much it has done—the book, the revelation, the truth, the Gospel, you find just where you always find them. The Bible is alive. You may have taken off its coat or patched it here and there with some historic or syntactical patching, and the coat may be none the worse for it, but the revelation is still alive, the truth is still as energetic in the Bible, as it ever was. He honours, keeps, the Bible who finds its truth, its Gospel, its mighty blood, and holds them up as the ministries and evidences of God. We owe nothing to ignorance. Ignorance is only pardonable when it knows that it is ignorant and wants to be instructed, refined, and ennobled.

Who keeps the law, or the Sabbath law, or any other ethical demand made by God? Who keeps it—the man who does works of necessity or works of mercy on the Sabbath day, or the man who slanders his neighbour? Which of them is keeping the law? If an ox or an ass fall into the ditch, take it out, whatever day it is; ay, stop the sacrament to take the poor creature out of the ditch, and come back, and the bread and the blood will be as good as ever. Interrupt any ceremony to do a work of mercy; stop the hymn that we may attend to the dying man, and when our impotence has done all in its power for him, begin the hymn again and shout it to a nobler music. Who keeps the Sabbath or honours the church or does the will of God—the person who amid many struggles and difficulties and self-accusations works on ploddingly, trying to attain another height; or the little stinging, waspish creature who is filled with jealousy

and makes bitter remarks about some poor body in the church who is ill-clad, and who has stolen away so to say from her poor little home, bringing the front door key in her pocket, that she might just hear a little gospel? Who keeps the Sabbath? Who keeps the law? You may, certainly I may, have indulged a jealousy against my brother that has made all my other so-called religion worse than a dead letter. When his name was mentioned I shrugged my shoulders, and murdered the man. When somebody said that he was truly useful as a minister of Christ and truly a good teacher of the kingdom of God, I lifted mine eyebrows towards the ceiling, and did so significantly with a superciliousness that was atheistic and worthy of perdition. You see? When the thing is thrust back upon ourselves, who then can be saved, where is judgment, where is criticism, where is my power of observing upon other people? Blessed be God, I cannot answer these questions, but must leave them unanswered. Sometimes we speak roughly about those who are doing infinitely better than we are doing. I may have said some cross or malicious thing about a brother who was in a very difficult position in a very difficult part of the country, and who could hardly make both ends meet, and who had to resort to some little arrangements that I in my foolish loftiness thought contemptible; but I did not know the sore that was in his heart, I did not understand how many were pursuing him with the view of drinking his very life-blood, but I blurted out my criticism, I contemned my brother, I made it harder for him to live, and I was orthodox! No, no! There is One that judgeth. Our orthodoxy may be one day stripped off our shoulders like a rag in whose folds may be found the very breath of pestilence. The first may be last and the last may be first, and those who are most suspected may come to be most trusted.

See then how we are driven back, back into the spirituality of religion. The true religion is not a certificate which you take out annually; the true faith is not a renewal of your registration at a guinea a year: it is something that belongs to the soul, the very soul of the soul, so that religion is an affair

between man and God, between God and man, away among the unspeakables, away among the saddest, gladdest ministries. We may keep the letter, and deny the spirit. This terrible orthodoxy, as it is misunderstood! Right beautiful when truly comprehended, as indicating the right, the square, the plumb, the eternal, the inflexible, the divine. There are many people who are nominally orthodox who really are the worst infidels. If you deny the Spirit of Christ, you are none of His. What is orthodoxy but a right relation of the heart to the living God, the redeeming Christ, the sanctifying Spirit? We may say prayers, and not pray. People do not understand that. We may gabble over all the prayers that ever were written by sainted men, and yet send not a single message to heaven, one yearning cry to the eternal throne. We may be at church, yet not in it; we may be attending the service, and sharing the psalm-book with another person, and yet all the while our hearts may be forecasting the next game with the devil. O how searching, how terrible! That is true, but from the first the axe was laid at the root of the tree, and until some roots are got rid of we cannot have a garden holy unto the Lord. We may have the book, but not the revelation; a beautifully bound Bible, but no spirit Bible, no spirit Gospel, singing to us and teaching us and helping us along all the way of life.

Then what is to be done with censoriousness? Excluded. What is to be done with remarking upon the evil and shortcoming of other people? Forget it. Search thine own heart, O my soul; pray God in these words: Search me and try me and see if there be any evil way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. That would be a revolution. A revolution is just what we want.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the great benediction of God, abide with us, that our whole life may be a Sabbath well kept. Amen.

NOTE.—*A solo is generally sung after the Thursday Morning Service. On November 22nd the following verses by Dr. Parker were sung by Miss Emmeline Fairbrass.*

HOPE.

I hear it singing, singing sweetly,
Softly in an under-tone ;
Singing as if God had taught it—
It is better farther on !

Night and day it sings the same song,
Sings it while I sit alone,
Sings so that the heart may hear it—
It is better farther on !

Sits upon the grave and sings it,
Sings it when the heart would groan,
Sings it when the shadows darken—
It is better farther on !

Farther on ? But how much farther ?
Count the milestones one by one,
No ! no counting—only trusting—
It is better farther on !

[*Sunday Morning, October 28th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALmighty GOD, we are glad to be in Thine house, and to be sitting at Thine own table ; in our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare. Outside Thine house we perish with hunger ; sitting at Thy table we know the meaning of the plenteousness of Thy love. We have come with a song of thankfulness, a great psalm of adoration is in our hearts and is rising from our lips ; we will not be silent amid the floods and thunders of Thy praise. Hear us, we humbly pray Thee, in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour. We plead no other name, we enter Thy presence by no other door ; Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and it is enough that we are permitted to plead His blood. Teach us the meaning of our own lives and of the things that are going on around us, that we may have understanding of the times and know what Israel ought to do. Men are failing for fear, the strongest are reeling through secret trouble ; Thou art winding up the centuries, Thou art to bring in the new morning. These things are signs, may we have eyes for tokens ; create within us the great religion of lofty expectancy ; we have looked down long enough, may we now look up and be saved. We bless Thee for the men gifted with insight and foresight, who can catch the first gleaming of the morning ; may we hear what they have to say, and give thanks to God for such vision. The earth is weary, she wants to be swung around the sun no longer, it hangs heavily upon her heart that she cannot see more and feel more and do more ; the earth is having its day. Oh that Thy people were awake ! oh that they could by their songs and lofty psalms put down the utterances of noise and uproar and tumult proceeding from the dens of the devil ! Clear out of Thy Son's way all dishonest hearts, all incapable minds, all bruised and unworthy statesmanship and leadership, and come Thou whose right it is and let us see at least the foot of Thy throne. We bless Thee for what we have known of Thy love, but it has only made us pine for a fuller revelation ; we would taste of Thy goodness and then would revel in it as hunger might revel in a banquet. Oh the tired earth ! She has no more room in her heart for graves and tears ; she longs and wearies for the morning. Lord Jesus, come quickly ! Amen.

CXI.

JUDGING BY NEGATIVES.

"Not . . . to condemn."—JOHN iii. 17.



HIS is one of a knot of passages. This is a lesson on endeavouring to find out what a thing is by first discovering what it is not. Sometimes by beginning at the other end we find our way most surely to the end that is final. Some scholars, slow of mind but willing of heart, can only learn things by first cutting away all the things that represent only the negative side. There are very few positive scholars or original intellectual inventors; some of us can go but slowly; thank God if we can go surely. And first of all we have to find out in many cases what a thing is not, what a man is not, what a policy is not, and then we may perhaps suddenly come face to face with what it is.

I want to collect specimens from the life of Christ which illustrate this homely but not unprofitable style of education and progress. Jesus Himself repeatedly told us what He was not. When we had learned that lesson, which a little child might learn, we began to wonder what He was, what He did come to do, what He did want to teach; in a word, what the Man wanted to be at. Sometimes we have to take a seat on the negative form and spend a whole day in writing down what Jesus Christ was not. Is this a strange and unfamiliar thing? No; it is our own daily process. We shall find that to be very much the case in the whole religious realm, we shall find that revelation is reason glorified and common sense enthroned, and that what we look upon as metaphysical, theological, and ineffable is just something that has all the time been in our own heart and instinct, our own intuition and practice, only we have not seen it, the root is far down in the black earth: who ever found the blossoms there? The blossoms play in the sunshine, they are children of

the morning, they speak the music language of the dawn. It would surely be profitable to the oldest of us just to gather a few instances from the meadows of the New Testament of what Jesus Christ expressly told us He was not. Jesus Christ was the economist of time. He told us that we need not appeal to such and such doors, for the jewel-case was not behind them. He would save us our time; He worked, in all His redeeming ministry, under the mighty pressure of the conviction that at any moment God might burn His way through the clouds and look at us, and His kingdom would be set up. Many of us are groping and stumbling; we have been burying our faces in His New Testament for a lifetime, and we lift them out of the hallowed pages knowing nothing about the fruitage and the fragrance of the holy vineyard.

Let us hear this sweetest of all speakers of sweet things. "I came not to call the righteous." That shuts up one section of society. Jesus Christ had nothing to say to the self-righteous, He left them to rot in their own conceit, He boycotted them, He would not deign to speak to them; for they did not realise their need of Him, and until need is realised prayer is impossible. It was very wonderful to watch the hauteur by which and through which He passed the righteous so-called. None so haughty as the Child of the manger when He liked! If He could lift His head to the stars, He could bend it down to the child in the gutter. Only majesty can condescend. "I came not to call the righteous"—all the thunders of heaven could not reach such deaf ears—"but I came to call sinners to repentance." How wondrously the positive shines upon us when we have realised the negative! Not to call the righteous, but to call the sinners of every name, grade, hue, and degree of badness. That will shorten our investigation into the life and purpose of Christ. When we meet men who are proud of their own respectability and who fully trust in the respectability of their ancestors as well as in their own respectability, we may be perfectly sure that it is no use leaving a Bible with them. They could not understand the book, they could not read it. Respectability knows nothing about the

Cross; they talk two different languages, they are irreconcilable opposites. No man who has an idea in his head respecting his own perfect respectability can read anything with advantage that Jesus Christ ever said. Take your sweetest, gentlest words to the utterly and impenetrably deaf, and you will understand what it is to attempt to preach the Gospel to a man who is perfectly satisfied with his own righteousness.

That is one instance. Take another. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto." Would we not be glad to be His servants? Yes, if we could get anything by it. Would we not be only too proud to help Him in any degree? No, we would not; it is a lie. If we make such claim and boast it is because we know nothing about ourselves, we do not understand the mystery of human nature. We verily think we would, and it would delight us to play lady-bountiful to the Lord, the Son of the heavens and the Child of eternity. But He came not to be ministered unto. He wanted no body servant, He asked for no one to wait upon Him. "Let him that is greatest among you be the servant of all." Why do not you believe in the Man that said that? And yet how indifferent we are in the very presence of the Gospel, with its manger and its Cross; what deadheads we are! In politics we rise into rage, uproar, enthusiasm, and all manner of madness, but in the great, holy, redeeming Gospel we have sunk into dough-headed indifference and blind criticism. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but"—now for the positive, and how much better we get at the positive by passing through the negative!—"to minister" to us: What can I do for you, blind beggar, wounded traveller, sin-sick sinner, poor outcast woman, little orphan child, what can I do for you? Why do you not believe in that Man? To believe in such a Man would be the salvation of your soul; to touch Him would be an inspiration; to hear that ineffable music would be an education.

That is the second instance. Take a third. "Not to destroy." The world had had destruction enough;

it had been drowned, it had been burned, it had been the place of plague and locust, and caterpillar, and overwhelming whirlwind, a place of sudden flood and mighty war, and the sword was turned up in the hand of the warrior. Behold, here is an evangel, a missionary from heaven unarmed. It is a great sight, and we poor fools run after sights that we think are great. Here is an unarmed missionary without sword or gun or certificate of authority from any swollen Cæsar. What is that in His right hand? Nothing. What does He secrete in His left hand? Nothing. What stiletto is hidden under His breast-covering? None. What is He going to do? Not to destroy men's lives, but to say to bruised ones, You can be recovered; to fainting ones, You can be set up on your feet again; to wondering groping ones, I would not crush you, I would shed a light upon your path and lift your poor paralysed hand to the latch of the gate. We shall one day see that destruction is the feeblest of all so-called missionary or reforming agencies. You can burn a rogue, but you can never burn his roguery out of him. That sort cometh forth only by a specific way. Until the soul is touched the rogue is alive. "Marvel not that I say unto you, Ye must be born again." The wonder is that people do not rush to this Son of God. They are fond of rushing to almost anything else, and anybody else, they have a genius for rushing; and the One that is left in solitude is Son of Mary, Son of man, Son of God. But the Lord will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come, and the Root out of a dry ground shall become the Flower of Jesse and the Plant of renown. It is a period of waiting, it is the ebb-tide; the great water will come back sevenfold in strength and turn the earth into the glory of shining crystal.

Take yet a fourth instance. "Not . . . to condemn the world." Judgment is as easy as destruction. Not to make men wantonly discontented and unhappy, not to turn conscience into a plague, but to encourage men, to show them how they may get out of all the wickedness and all the misery. I have not come to condemn the world; any poor creature could do that; I have come to save the world; I am not

going to pelt you with impossible maxims, and to hang up before you some blackboard, chalk-written with apothegms as to what you should do at this hour or at that; I have come not to condemn you, but to lay down My life for you. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus is come into the world to save sinners." That is the Gospel. Never in your preaching try to turn the Gospel into a difficulty; never give the people the impression that you do not know exactly the message which you came to deliver; make it simple, direct, and deliver it with fervour. Fire wins; fire is mad. Oh! for the return of the time when we had children reading the Bible, the old, old time when the Bible was the most living book in the house, when we shall have no more to ask, Where is the Bible? or, in other words, Have any of you seen the Bible lately? When the time comes when our children take up with Bible reading, I will ask those who may be representatively living at that time to ask the children to get together all the passages in which Jesus Christ says what He is not, and then on the other side all the passages in which He tells what He is. O thou old, old mother's Bible, art thou done and cast out, and do we find thee in the dustbin? Thy day will return. It is godlike to be patient.

Now all these instances give us a philosophy and a policy. They do not end in themselves. We ought to apply this principle not to Christ only, but to all that belongs to Christ, and we ought to apply it to the whole circle of our own life with its manifold ministries and engagements. This will shorten our investigations into the innermost meanings of things, and soon bring us face to face with what we are really in search of, if so be we are earnest men. It is just so we must judge the Bible itself. Will someone give us a number of happy sentences which will run from this point—The Bible is not——? That would be good; there is so much confusion about what the Bible is that we would be very much helped indeed if anybody would tell us simply and kindly what the Bible is not, or allow the Bible itself to tell us. As Jesus told us what He did not come to do, would it be wonderful if some kindly, wise philosopher said to

us, The Bible did not come to teach the multiplication table or to give even elementary lessons in geology, astronomy, and botany? The Bible did not come to set up a system of metaphysics, and the Bible did not come—oh, hear it!—to set up a system of theology. Then what did the Bible come to do? To talk to us about God and our own heart and our own sin, and about Jesus Christ, and the way to get out of sin; the Bible came to tell us about repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible is a religious book, it is all religious, it is flowing over with religion. What a help that is! That idea helps me very strongly, as did the definition of Jesus Christ's own purpose in coming into the world. How wise He was, and how gracious, to tell me what He was not, and what He did not come to do and what He never thought of doing, and then to tell me that He came at the bidding of love to redeem with blood and to recover the lost image of God. Such teaching, if received in its true spirit, and exemplified in its spiritual genius, would give us a new earth wherein would dwell austere righteousness and fair charity and gleaming hope. How unjust we have been to the Bible by going to it for things that it never intended even to mention! And what a fatuity there is about some cripples who, against the protests of God and the angels, will seek out those parts of the Bible that they never can understand! If men would begin at what the Bible really came to do, then they might gradually, little by little, put all other things in the Bible into their right perspective, and we should then have a new reading of the Scripture, and would find it to be the newest of all literature, the Old Testament wet with the dew of the morning. But men will not do this; they will go into recondite portions, they will go into incidentals and collaterals, and miss the music. Let them do it! Let the devil handle them now, for I am sick of them! When they have been in his hot school a day or two they may want to get out of it and come back to the old sanctuary to hear of free grace and dying love.

The same policy would apply to the Church of

Christ under all its names, sections, and divisions. What is the Church? That is the question. We can only get the answer by first considering what it is not. The Church is not a club, a recreation ground, a little debating society; the Church of the living God is not a political institution, covered by an Act of Parliament, directed by atheists, infidels, and worldlings, who care nothing about the Church. These definitions point out what the Church is not. What is the Church? The temple of the living God, whose foundations are on eternity, whose roof is loftier than the stars. What is the Church? The blood-redeemed host of faith and truth, of justice and charity. What is the Church? A grand human association undenominationalised, unsectarianised; a great heart living in the greater heart of God. The Church is all-inclusive. It is so that if it had its own way, so far as the will of man is concerned, it could turn even refuse into jewels. We are not church-makers; the Church does not belong to the arts and crafts of progressive industry; it is not a new architecture in kennels and in hiding-places and in mean furniture. The Church is the human heart, redeemed, sanctified, garnished with the loveliness of heaven; inhabited by the triune God. Receive that conception of the Church, and then say to Cæsar and his Cæsarettes, Hands off!

Thus we come to positive and practical definitions and limitations. The doctor is not come into the house of the invalid to play the piano. What is he come to do? He has come to see the sick, to comfort the weak and the ailing, and to shed the sunshine of health in the darkened house. Good! I see it now; if I once thought that he came to play music, how wrong I was! He came to heal the sick; he came not to prescribe to the healthy, but to save those whose health had given way. The lawyer came not to heal sickness. That is a new idea to me; that defines the man's function. Certainly; that is just where it is, and that is the point where you got wrong. You thought that the lawyer, being a man of education and trained faculty, had come to set a bone. Oh no! He came not to set bones, but to convey property, to draw up wills and testamentary depositions, and to give you an

inkling of the meaning of the law in certain practical relations. I see, I see! that is where I got wrong; I thought that he was a doctor; I thought once he was come to the house to tune the piano: how I have mistaken that, what a fool I have been! Just what you have been in relation to the great Christian verities and spiritual revelations; you mistook their purpose, you misunderstood their intent. So, when the revelation of God comes to me in the form of the Bible, I will not play the fool over it, but I will say, Where is God? what is His name? what does He want me to be? what provision has He made for my manhood in its worst estate and in its best? What interpretation does this book give me of certain instincts, intuitions, fears, hopes, longings? What does it say about this longing after immortality?

I long to associate all my friends with these ideas, which have given such a glowing warmth to my own heart and such an uplift to all my aspirations. If I could get some people with their larger capacity to feel about these questions as I do, a holy madness would come over the whole Church. Those of us who believe these truths must protect them, propagate them, and give them honour. They are the salt of the earth, they are the light of the world.

The offering that is now to be given, let it be given only by those who feel they must give it.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the three secrets of God, be hidden in our aching, waiting, wondering hearts! Amen.

[*Thursday Morning, November 1st, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALmighty GOD, we bless Thee for the testimonies of the wise and the true, the good and the pure, in all ages.

How Thou hast piled up witness on behalf of Thine own Word and Kingdom ! Who can deny it all ? It were to deny the sun shining in the heavens, or the sea flashing on the seashore. Behold, we trust in a testimony of life, in living men, in living character, in undeniable service, in living epistles read and known of all men. Thou art rewriting that covenant in every newly-created life ; in all Christian experience Thou art illuminating Thyself and illustrating Thy kingdom and making it clearer and still clearer that God is love. Help us to read life, to read living men, to study the practical virtue that is round about us ; then shall we have the evidence of the spirituality of Thy kingdom revealed in Jesus Christ the Lord. How wonderful is Thy kingdom ! Behold, Thy palaces and temples are built of living stones ; the jewels are all alive. We have come upon the life in everything, and the life is of God, and is God, and is love. Behold, one day we shall see that we have been living in the midst of life. Amen.

CXII.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

"She felt that she was healed."—MARK v. 29.



Nobody told her. The news was not communicated to her by some secret news agency. No one laid a gentle hand upon her, and speaking whisperingly in her ear said, Now you are healed. Nothing of that kind took place; it was a much simpler and clearer case. "She felt in her body that she was healed of that plague." That is the only true authority. When you have to be told that you are cured, it would appear to me that the cure is somewhat doubtful. You who have been cured must tell everybody, and you can hardly help doing so, that you are cured, and that you are the authority for the statement. What a sad, poor thing it would be if you had to tell your own little child that it was now cured of the toothache. The child will soon tell you when the cure has taken place; the laugh will convey the news, the radiant little face will be the signal. You need not hug the little child and say, "My dear, you are now quite cured of the toothache." The child would smile back in your face, the child would say, I know that the toothache is dead and gone, I feel it, I am quite sure of it; I have no toothache at all. That is a very homely illustration, but really effective, if you will take it in the sense in which it is intended. We are not to tell people that they are cured; they rise, they are living epistles known and read of the people round about them. "Once I was blind, now I see." Nobody went to the poor man and said, Allow me to suggest to you that you are now able to see. The witness must not come from that quarter; the witness must come from the other quarter; it is the healed man who testifies; he says, I know, once I was blind, now I see, I see you all, I see the heavens and the earth, I do not need to be told by some man outside that I really have recovered my eyesight. Yet

that is what the poor Church always is pining for ; it is pining that somebody should tell it that on the whole it is better than it used to be. I do not believe in external testimony when the subject is so personal and so vital ; I must hear what the person himself has to say. Yet in pastoral visitation we come upon persons who are continually requiring to be told that though they were blind last week they can see this week, and they say in reply, Are you sure of it ? are you perfectly clear in your own mind that I do see a little ? Never stoop to such whimpering. You as pastors of the Church have no time to waste over people that require to be told seven times a day that they can see a little. They can see, or they do not see, and they know it, and they only know it, and the testimony must come from them ; they must bear witness to the truth. What an army of preachers I have created in this one sentence given to me by the Holy Spirit ! All Christians have to be witnesses, to be living testimonies, that they have become connected with the eternal fountains, and are no longer in need of supply from inferior streams.

What a marvellous picture this is ! But there is a counter side, shall we say a corroborative side, strongly and perfectly confirming the woman's own feeling. You have it in the very next verse ; that is to say, Mark v. 30, "And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him." There you have the double picture : the woman knew she had received something, and Jesus that He had given something ; with that double testimony who shall stand up and deny it in either of its aspects ? All this is a matter between the Lord and His people ; this secret is not blabbed on the streets in the common language of the time ; it is a holy intercommunication. Jesus says, "Who touched Me ?" The woman says, "If I may but touch." That is a secret transaction. The kingdom of heaven has its secret aspects ; there is no noise, there is no bold crying in the streets. This mystery of intercommunication is going on all the day, the outgoing of faith, the incoming of healing. That is the gracious mystery, and in that mystery we ought to live and grow and become quite strong. Ministers surely know when virtue has gone out of

them. There are sermons that cost nothing; there are discourses that are delivered from the lips; there is a fluent ignorance. There are sermons that tear the soul as they come out of it—the upper side of that marvellous demoniacal possession. It may be said that all true preaching comes out of demoniacal possession, a sacred, marvellous madness. If we have preached, and can immediately preach again, we have not preached. There are persons who do not know what preaching is. It wastes the soul; it is a shedding of blood; it is a surrender sacrificial, redeeming and sanctifying life. It may be quite possible for persons to preach and to lose nothing, but if they lose nothing they gain nothing. That is the solemn and all but tragical mystery. Jesus Christ gave Himself; He turned His own soul into wisdom, parable, gospel invitation, and feast of mercy. What wonder that He lived but a little time when the drain or the strain upon Him was so exhausting?

Let us realise this beautiful idyll. The woman “felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.” That is one side; take the other side: “And Jesus, immediately knowing”—instantaneously and thrillingly knowing that He had lost something, asked, “Who touched Me?” This is the worship of God, this is the feast of healing; personal experience on both sides; Jesus conscious of loss, the sufferer conscious of gain. He ever lives to give. It would seem sometimes as if God had no other purpose in life, no other reason for continuing to exist, than that He might give Himself away. He “so loved that He gave,” and He loved so that He gave all He had, and would have been poor to-day but that He who delivered up His Son also recovered Him from the grave, and set Him at His right hand in the glory nightless and eternal.

What a wonderful testimony we find in the first Epistle of John, chapter one, and the opening of the chapter, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.” Had they no

personally original remarks to make? None. How did they preach? By telling what they knew; not by telling what somebody else knew. Information is not inspiration. The apostles did not say, "According to the various authorities which we have consulted." We should turn our backs upon them, and let them consult more authorities if they were so minded thus to fritter away their time and their opportunity. Then what did they say? "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled." This is experimental preaching? Yes, that is really substantially the only preaching worth preaching. That was how the Apostle Paul was so great a preacher. He always told the people what he had seen and known and felt and handled. He said, in effect, Men, brethren, and fathers, this is a personal matter: I was travelling, and travelling in the glory of the midday, and suddenly there outshone from the gleaming heavens a light that put out the sun, and the light was so intense and smiting that I fell down as one dead; and a voice said to me in the Hebrew tongue, Paul, Paul, why persecutest thou Me? This is a personal anecdote, you say. Certainly; that is preaching: what you have seen in the darkness, and in the light above the light, in the sacramental light of the higher noon-day. Wherever the apostle went he had his sermon with him, because he was his sermon. He did not carry it in any pocket of his own, bag or case, he carried it in his soul, and he was ready at a moment's notice to stand upon the landing or to stand out in the market-place, and to say, Men, brethren, and fathers, I will tell you what has happened to me; I have received conversion, grace, help, succour from God, and I will tell you all about it. That is experimental preaching; that is the preaching I revel in; I would go anywhere to hear it.

I have two or three friends to whom I go when my soul is dull and I cannot see how big the heaven is. They are such ministers to me because they can tell me about the conversions they have seen, the instances that illustrate the Gospel in its most beneficent aspects. They do not tell me anecdotes, they relate experience, and they bring me down to tears. I would not care,

in the moods to which I refer, to listen to elaborate arguments, because one argument can always be answered by another, and the most ingenious rhetorical combination can be vexed and troubled by some man who has a special gift of cross-examination. But when souls give up their secrets, when the living man is before me, who has seen, felt, known, handled, and who can say to his soul, All these things are true, then he finds my heart at once, and I become a little child in his hands. Why? Because he has seen this and known this, and it is in his face. The character is always self-revealing. No man said in the old, old time, Why is Israel judged and ruled by a woman? And Deborah, the wife of Lapidoth, gave the answer in her face, her voice, her tone, so that Barak, so-called king, when answering her importunity, said, I will go with thee on one condition. What is that condition? said Deborah in effect. It is that thou, mother in Israel, wilt go with me. That is idyllic. The little child says to the mother, I will go if I may take hold of your hand. Certainly; that is beauty, that is poetry, that is force. And Barak, poor milksop of a king, said, I will go, thou magnetic, singular, ghostly being, if thou wilt not forsake me; take hold of my hand, and I will go. Where was her authority? In her face, her voice, her blood, her personality; and no man said, Why is Israel judged by a woman? It is thus that we must conquer the world. We must not say, If you can give me two or three little ideas and small tracts, I will see what can be done. If it comes to a question of small tracts and small suggestions and hints on a postcard, don't go; but if it comes to, I feel in myself, in my soul, then you cannot help going, you must go. That is preaching, preaching that cannot be put down; not preaching in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in the power of the Spirit and the demonstration of the omnipotent grace of the Cross.

The Apostle Paul put it in another way, which, however, comes to the same thing. I will in this connection quote a text, and ask you to preach from it. It is a forgotten subject to a large extent; happily it is not forgotten in some churches. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the

children of God." I have never dared to preach from that text. I have kept in mine heart all these years, and cannot yet find words fit enough for such ineffable, supernal music. It would be easier to me to preach upon some little incident in the Bible, quails or lions or fed multitudes; I am not yet old enough, sensitive enough, or spiritual enough to handle this great masonic subject. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God." Many persons have preached upon the witness of the Spirit, and the Friends—alas! too quickly dying out!—the Friends or Quakers have a great doctrine of the Spirit, the inward light, the inward witness, the speaking voice within which reveals in music many visions of the divine mercy and the infinite pity and love of God. Now we have our evidences on the shelves of the library to too great an extent, and we ask if you are aware that there is another book on the witness of the Spirit. My dear friend, the witness of the Spirit is in you, or it has no existence so far as you are concerned. It is not an argument, it is a revelation; it is not something you can climb to intellectually, it is something which you can receive and only receive in a broken-hearted and contrite condition of mind. Have we that witness of the Spirit? Then the Church cannot die. If we have only a library Christianity, we have no Christianity at all. What about the communication between heaven and earth? what about the Christ feeling that He has lost something, and the woman feeling in herself that she has gained something, and the woman standing in the perfectness of a completed health, and saying, ever so softly and whisperingly—for in such case a whisper is a great cry of thunder—I touched Thee, Thou dear Son of God?

Have we touched the Saviour? If so, why not say so? why not be personal witnesses to a divine experience? If we only have what the books have given us, all that we have can be taken away from our hearts; but if the Spirit itself bear witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, then our religion, if I may so say, is treasured where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

There is a permanent question amongst us about authority. It is a poor question, a very small question. Authority is in experience. The true authority of the preacher is in what the preacher knows in his own heart, of the grace, mercy, and peace of God. What then comes? Preaching. Who authorises the man to preach? Nobody; and nobody can authorise anybody but Christ Himself. Go ye, you have heard, felt, seen, handled of the Word of life,—away! tell the listening world that you carry the witness in your heart, that you are a child of God. Do not suppose that a man can be licensed to preach as you would license a man to sell intoxicating drinks; do not suppose a man can take out a licence for preaching as he can take out a licence for keeping a dog. This is not a matter of excise, or a matter of inland revenue, or a matter of official endorsement and certification. If we have the kingdom of God in us we must be talking about it. Sometimes we cannot talk, very likely; then we are not public speakers, but we are private witnesses, and may be none the less effective on that account. It is not a question of being so sensitive that we really cannot name it; it is a question of being so closely identified with the bleeding heart of Christ that we must tell it. Ah, there is a fallacy that must be blown out of the Church; ram it down the throat of some great gun and set fire to the powder, and let the fallacy be blown out into the engulfing sea. The fallacy is that religion is so very sacred that it must not be spoken about. Do you ever speak of your baby? Is it possible that I have known you so long, and you never mentioned the babe? Is it so sacred that you could not on any account name it? You cannot help naming it. You may have your own way of naming it, but name it you must, and simply because it is so tender and exquisite a subject that you must try to make me believe that your babe is the fairest blossom in the garden of God. That is right. When you are as just to the religious instinct that has been sanctified and fastened on the babe Christ, then we shall hear a good deal about it, and you will speak with confidence, without hesitant doubt, because you will only tell me what you have seen and known and felt and handled of the Word of life; you will have, not docu-

mentary evidence, but living, palpitating proof of the existence and sovereignty of the redeeming Christ.

This also is the true strength. If we have our salvation only in our memory we may lose it at any moment. Salvation is not a recollection only, it is a present experience, it is the joy of the morning, it is the crown of the noonday. This is true joy—what we ourselves have felt and known and seen and handled. We may forget what the preacher told us, but we cannot forget that Christ is warming our hearts all the day. Now what would you think of the woman mentioned in this gospel story if she had gone round amongst her friends and said, Do you think I am looking any better? Foolish preacher! If she had called in all her relatives and said, Do you think I am cured of the plague? Foolish woman, impossible woman! She did not come to ask them questions, but to give them information, news from heaven. The healed blind man did not say, Now, gentlemen, on the whole, do you think I have got any vision, any faculty of sight? O, do tell me what your opinion is; now I shall be glad to know your opinion, and if you can give me any comfort about this subject I shall be most happy to receive it; do you think that I see? An impossible folly, a disgraceful exhibition of ingratitude. No; the man said, One thing I know: whereas I was blind, now I see—and Jesus did it!

I have been greatly refreshed by my visit to the United Free Church of Scotland. The kingdom of God is still visible and the power of the Spirit is still manifest. When some six thousand people animated by one spirit come together in worship and in holy fellowship without one jarring note, one cannot deny the solemnity and the suggestiveness of the fact. That was the case yesterday in the Waverley Market, Edinburgh. I sat there from, say, nine o'clock in the morning, with a brief interval, until nine o'clock at night. Some of the finest spirits in Scotland took part in the great function. There was not one hitch in all the somewhat complicated and delicate proceedings; everything had been foreseen and arranged for, and the whole process went forward without hesitation and

without difficulty. The outstanding event of the day, so far as public expression was concerned, was, beyond all doubt, the noble, massive, masterly address of the illustrious first Moderator, Principal Rainy—a man raised up of God to do this holy work, and probably no other living man could do it. What an assembly it was! Rich and poor, the foremost ministers and the hindmost, so far as mere secular or earthly position is concerned; what a representative throng! We were sitting within touch of one another, and we felt as if mysteriously we belonged to one another in the uniting power of the divine grace. There was Lord Rosebery, Lord Overtoun, Lord Kinnaird, Lord Aberdeen, and many others, and intermixed with them ministers from the Highlands and the islands, from small places and from great places, and we were consciously one as we sang some old Scotch psalms without accompaniment of an instrumental kind; the heart accompanied the voice, and the voice ministered to the heart, and there was a great thunder-roll of most solemn and inspiring music.

I at one of the services sat next to probably the most conspicuous Established Church minister in Scotland, the great Rector of St. Giles's Cathedral. He was there in a personal capacity; he did not profess to represent the Established Church, but he made a statement as to his love of the brethren which I believe will turn out to be historical and to be as a living stone in the new temple of Scottish church life. It was not discouraging to me, and I speak it in the love and fear of God, to hear the minister of St. Giles's Cathedral say to me in private that he had not seldom sat in these pews which you are now occupying on a Thursday morning. So who can tell where the word goes and what little or great good it may do? I should not have known of this incident but for the meeting of yesterday, and it is no small incident if it so stimulated a heart as to throw off ten years of its age and be so far encouraged as to begin again with some measure of youthfulness. (Applause.) Tell me that the Scotch cannot be warm-hearted! You will not say so, because you are not disposed to bear false witness against any people. A more warm-hearted people I

never met than I met yesterday and in years gone by in the cities and towns of Scotland.

The United Presbyterian Church and the Free Church of Scotland have amalgamated, and are now to be known hence on as the United Free Church of Scotland. (Applause.) I am never sorry when little distinctions of a denominational or a controversial character vanish. The fewer distinctions we have the better. We are growing towards solidarity, we are growing towards a better knowledge of one another, and the more we know of one another, I believe, through the grace of God, the more we shall esteem, love, and honour one another. Have nothing to do with the perpetuation of merely controversial distinctions; aim at true union of heart and sympathy, and the blessing of God will be upon us, and we shall be able to show a united front to the whole world that we have been with Jesus and learned of Him.

Many details I shall have to refer to in another place and in another way, but this is the burden of the whole, that the Lord was amongst His people, and His people knew that the Lord was in their midst.

Benediction.

Grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, abide with us, till we see in heaven the King in His beauty! Amen.

[*Sunday Morning, November 4th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

WE come to Thy throne, Almighty God, by the way of Thy Cross, O Christ our Saviour. The throne and the Cross are both ours through the overflow and immeasurableness of the divine mercy. There is no way to Thee but by the Cross,—an open way, full of sorrow, full of joy; a great miracle of contradiction, a greater miracle of harmony. Jesus died for us, and rose again; the resurrection is ours, as well as the crucifixion. We come to worship Thee in the midst of these great mysteries. We love the mysteries of God; they chasten and ennoble and glorify us even in the depth of our penitential humiliation. We love that which cannot be fully thought, and that which can never be expressed; we think of Thine eternity, infinity, and majesty, and we know not what these words mean, yet we know that they mean something great and true and worthy, and something that the soul may rely upon in the hour of distress and dejection. Thou hast been a great comfort unto Thy people from the olden time, yea, even from the dawn of the morning Thou hast comforted the souls which Thou hast made; Thy comfort is never ceasing; it is available to-day; it is our strength this morning. Lord, help us, then shall we live a little longer; we want to live that we may help to repair the past. This we ourselves can never do, but Jesus Christ can do it, and it will help us to live when we think that He is doing it, and that we may yet, by the infiniteness of the divine love, see somewhat of the beginning of the soul's true cleansing. Thou wilt not let us go down into the grave when our memories are darkest; Thou wilt help us to see the brightness of Thy love and be assured of the nearness of Thy presence; then our dying shall be but another form of breathing. We bless Thee for all that supports the soul: in very deed it needs support. For some are sick and dying, and they are at home, sanctifying by their very affliction the homes they can no longer serve. It is weary waiting; it is weary to think that there may yet be some sharper pain, some deeper stroke. Wilt Thou comfort such of our friends as are not with us because the house is very dark, and it is not worth while lighting a fire even in the beginning of winter. Their souls are weary; their expectation has been cut off; they feel that they have nothing more to wait for. This is the opportunity of God; help Thy people in their sore distress, and give them a season of rejoicing, an interval of light. And some are full of strength; they are stalwart, strong, rampant in their vigour; they know not that the

day of weakness is but to-morrow: may they live whilst they live, and give whilst they give, and altogether serve the Lord ere the sun begin to set. Thou knowest the meaning of physical enthusiasm; Thou dost know the religious meaning of the health of the body. O may those who enjoy it not waste any of their strength, but use it as if they had yet to give account of it to the Giver. Thou knowest what life is to many; it is but a burden. It is a journey uphill, over a rough road, and there are thieves lying in wait; some have not yet seen life; they have only endured a form of unhappy existence; they have heard of the meadows and the places where the daisies grow and the birds sing, but they have only heard of these things by the hearing of the ear. To many it is a struggle to live; how to get through the day is the problem of the soul. Wilt Thou not come to us all, rich and poor, strong and weak, and make this a gladsome day by the visitation of Thy presence and by the benediction of Thy voice? Then indeed shall this very week be a week of victory, and when Saturday's sun sets we shall feel that we have been with the Lord. Amen.

CXIII.

PLURAL, YET SINGULAR.

"Truth . . . judgment . . . righteousness."—JEREMIAH iv. 2.



I WANT to speak about the plural that runs itself up into the singular. "Truth, judgment, righteousness." We cannot get rid of the three; when we sometimes think we are furthest from it we are closest upon it. It is a mystery that is to be reckoned with. Indifference, worldliness, folly, may avoid all these subjects, and thus run a downward and self-extinguishing course. There remains the idea of the three. We cannot, let us say again and again to ourselves, get away from that idea; it is in us, it is part of us, it is the mystery of our own being. We deny the three-one, but denial is no argument. We have to account for the triune. Let me say again that indifference accounts for nothing; but upon nothing do we ever consult indifference.

It is not in the court, it is not on the witness sheet: why drag it in? why not allow it to live its own jejune, trifling, foolish life, and go out a spark neither regarded nor remembered? Earnest people must do earnest work in reading the Bible and in studying life. How is it with this matter of the three-one, the one-three, the trinity in unity—not only in the Godhead, but in the grassblade? So many subjects are churchified, and are thus taken away from the natural, free, summer growing air, and are shut up where they are likely to die. This is foolish, this is wrong, this is self-robbery. You cannot get away from the three; you breathe it, you do it whilst you are denying it. It is as true in botany as it is in theology. Why then not face the metaphysic? It would seem cruel to ask anybody to face the psychological, but only fools will avoid it. Better know what it is, what it means; better face the difficulty than live a fool's life and breathe a fool's chatter. What is the threefold presence that is under my feet, over my head, away on the horizon line? What is this three-one of the Bible? If I close the Bible I do not get rid of the Trinity; if I leave the Church and go and ramble on the mountain side I have not got rid of the great mysteries of life; salvation still blows its welcoming trumpet; damnation still treads down its sons of perdition. Better therefore that we should hasten to the altar and get some real knowledge and deep spiritual acquaintance with the things of God. There is a wonderful figure of speech in the higher rhetoric in which three means one, and one means three, and in which three things give up two of their own number in order to be the epithets of the three. Why not look into these inner subjects? why the fool's cackle and the madman's laugh, when we might think with God and ride upon the circle of eternity?

You will find instances of this three-one in many places. For example, in the very words of the text, on which I need dwell but a moment, for they are to be considered rather as a beginning than as the fulness of the subject. "Truth, judgment, righteousness." These are not three things differing from one another in quality and opposing one another in policy and in aim; the three are one,

and that one is the first—"truth." How then do the others apply themselves? Adjectivally as qualifying the great and inclusive word truth. Truth—yes, truth that stands in judgment, truth that stands in righteousness, truth that runs out in these threefold expressions and yet returns upon itself and stands forth as it were a diamond or a star. Why break up this unity? why not see that truth is the whole quantity? why not notice that truth includes judgment and righteousness? Why not see that the bird is one, yet three—the body, and the wings on which the body flies? The wings are not the body, the body is not the wings; they belong to one another; the quantity would not be the same if either was removed. All things, therefore, must be taken in their valid plurality and final unity. You must not be remarking upon this or that little feature or colour in the great subject. The subject is one, and all your remarks upon it must be capable of running back into the central thought, giving it massiveness and completeness.

Perhaps you will see this better by a more striking example. In Daniel iii. 7 "all the people, the nations, and the languages fell down." Can languages fall down? Is there not something here highly rhetorical and figurative? Certainly; that is the very subject. The reading, therefore, would be, All the people—yes, even nations and languages—fell down before the image. The great noun is "the people"; "nations and languages" are little aspects of the great substantive, "the people." So we do not read, "All the people and the nations and the languages," as if they were three different things; the great central thought is the people, the incidentals are the nations and the languages, and yet quite essential to the completeness of the figure. How easy it would be to run off on either of these nouns, "nations," and "languages," and deliver a useless ethnic discourse upon these motto words. These words must be put in their right place, and that place is subsidiary and collateral; the great outstanding noun is "the people." Nations are but parishes, languages are but village dialects; the thing, the main thing, the abiding constant quantity, is the man, the people. And this is the intention of the writer in the

language in which he wrote. This may be a surprise to us, but anything else would be a surprise to the original writer.

Take another instance with which we are very familiar, so familiar indeed that many of us know nothing about it. Matt. vi. 13, "Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory,"—as if they were three different things. When will we remember that there is a leading noun, and the two other nouns shade away and subside into rhetorical assistances and phases of the thought? How then would it be read according to the first intention, that is to say, the intention of the writer? Thine is the kingdom—yes, the kingdom of power, the kingdom of glory. The subject is one; the writer is not talking about three different attributes; he is talking about one thing, but he needs the rhetorical three members in order to fill out the expression of his thought. Here also we cannot get rid of the three-one. If we have any sense of music in us—I do not say of mere notation—we cannot be content with less than the three; the three constitute a climax; if one was absent the other two would complain; we must therefore have the whole three, but each in its own place. "Thine is the kingdom." Enough; it is a kingdom Christ is thinking of; He had no other subject, whatever else He spake about had reference backward and forward to the kingdom of God. So the prayer concludes in many manuscripts, "Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory"; better, Thine is the kingdom, great in power, dazzling and blinding in glory. We had better understand these things, because they help us the more intelligibly and intelligently to read the holy Word, in which there is much bungling and murdering done for want of knowing which is the emphatic word, and which is the word incidental and collateral.

Take a wonderful instance from the lips of Christ Himself; you will find that instance in the fourteenth chapter of John and the sixth and contextual verses. What Jesus Christ is talking about is the way. "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." He simply states "way" without epithet, but way is the subject. "Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we

know not whither Thou goest ; and how can we know the way ?"—which is the very word which Jesus Christ Himself used. And Jesus saith unto him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Three things? No, one thing. Jesus Christ is talking about the way and about nothing else. How then does He describe it? "I am the way, the true way"—you see how "truth" drops into "true," the noun into the adjective—"and the living way." But it is way, way, and only way that forms the subject of the Master's thought. Always get into the one thing that makes the other things possible. Do not waste your very souls on the details. Your first business is to get hold of the central truth, the one thing meant, and then to get hold of what is illustrative, external, and auxiliary.

"As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be." Are there three things there? Certainly not. What is there? Being, personality, continuance; aspects and times, moods and tenses varying, but the I AM governing all.

You have the same thing in your own personal constitution. The apostle describes us as "body, soul, and spirit." Three things? Certainly not. One thing? Yes, one thing. What is that one thing? Man; and man is a trinity, and a tri-unity, a three-one and a one-three; and as he studies himself in these aspects there will come upon him great religious moods, visions, and dreamings, and he will find that grass and flesh and air and many things have been made specially for the growth and culture of the body. Then he will ask himself, Is there anything in higher fields growing for the soul? And the answer will be a gracious Yes whispered from the secret places of eternity. There is a spirit, there is a revelation, there is a holy doctrine, there is an altar, and as he watches the fields and the rivers and the seas for the food which he needs for the body, so he will search these greater waters and greater spaces for the nurture of the soul. But is there nothing for the spirit, which seems to be, according to our poor crude thinking, a kind of higher quality, a more spiritualised and etherealised soul,

even the spirit? God is a Spirit. God is not what we call a soul, a psyche; God is a pneuma, a spirit, a Spirit of the soul. The soul is but a kind of clothing for the spirit, but body, soul, spirit belong to one another, and constitute what but an ineffable unity? How egregious a fool is he, of whom his very mother would be ashamed, who says, Let who may look after the soul, I mean to fatten the body. Is that the man you would choose for a companion? It is equal to saying, Let who may read, I will eat; let who will go to the altar, I will go to the trough. You would not keep company with such a man; you would avoid him, you would see that he is feeding the beast and starving the angel, and you would not account him your friend. Why should you then be as he is in the development and education of the unity of your nature? There is a place for the body, there is a place for the soul, and there is a place for the spirit; we ought, however, to distinguish as to value and to understand clearly what is our relation to central facts and enduring entities and forces, and let the highest always control the lowest—ay, stamp upon it and hold it in comparative contempt. Is that the way men are living now? It is not. Anywhere for a feast, nowhere for an altar. Oh the sadness of it and the horrible possibilities of what it may grow to! Anywhere for the outward, the concrete, whilst the Church is forsaken and the altar a dead stone. Arise, awake, and appreciate the right relation of things. Each has its place, each indeed has its own degree of importance, but seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. That is the Christian Magna Charta; you cannot lie down and remain a Christian. Christianity is not an official robe to be taken off the shoulders and thrown into some dusty corner. It is all, or it is nothing. Other things, therefore, must stand aside. Now it is, What does my Lord require? O tell me, my Lord, what can I do? Is it written in your great Charta? I will read you what is written: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Not, Seek ye first the glitter and the flash and the devil's folly, and keep your Lord, the wounded God, standing outside, till some poor, miserable, ever-perishing god of clay is all but adored. The Church will not do this, and therefore the Church is dying. I have absolutely no faith

in the future of the Church when I regard it from this point of view only, but when I get into higher regions and higher levels I see all the sky radiant with the coming day in which the Lord Jesus shall be the one name that shall absorb and glorify all other names.

You cannot get some people out of the letter; they have no genius for the reading of parables; they do not see that every blade of grass is a parable representing the kingdom of God. What is to be done with them? The only thing that I know of is, do all in your power to constrain them to hold their tongues. They pick out little texts, and found denominations upon them; they see one little line of Scripture, and then build a chapel in honour of it, and get up a subscription list to support it. These people are not Christians, but they may be—who knows?—struggling to become Christians. If they could only see themselves in that light they would be persons that could be for a few strictly enumerated moments tolerated. How much ado there has been about eating and drinking the Lord's body and the Lord's blood. Of course, Jews put the emphasis always falsely; that is a trick of unbelief. The Jews said, How can this man give us His body to eat? That was not really the subject; the subject was, Eat and drink. The things to start with were the body or flesh, the blood. Looking at the matter from the thus merely literal point of view, they had a good deal to say in their own defence; but the thing to be noticed by Christian believers and students is a great sacramental process of eating, drinking, that is to say, absorbing, appropriating, assimilating—what? The Lord, the Christ, in parable bread or flesh, in parable wine or blood. But the central and moving thought is eating and drinking. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; such hungering and thirsting are their own satisfaction. He who eats the sacrament of the Lord's flesh and blood expresses an outgoing hunger of the soul for God, for pardon, for communion.

Thus we find in the benediction that each member of the Trinity is personal and is treated as such in holy Scripture. Now it is "the peace of God"; we understand that. In another case it is, "The grace

of our Lord Jesus Christ"; that is so. You can start the apostolic benediction from either point, making for the moment for educational and illustrative purposes each Member of the Trinity the governing noun, and the others the illustrative adjectives. But each is the same, now at the first, now at the last, now in the midst. Touch the benediction where you like, it is a personality, it is a sensitive reality of the soul.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the great Triunes, abide with us till the shadows are chased away. Amen.

SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 4TH, 1900.

Anthem 59 "O Dayspring" *Stainer*
The Lord's Prayer.—*Field.*

Hymn 70 ... "My Saviour, my Almighty Friend."
1st Lesson. Isaiah lii. 7-10.

7. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! [*Music upon music, billow upon billow.*]

8. Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. [*The jubilees of life, the millenniums of life, the emancipation days when even the dumb must sing.*]

9. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem. [*The birthdays of life, the song-days of life, the prophecy-fulfilling days of life.*]

10. The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations [*not to destroy and work some miracle of havoc; no: when this holy arm is made bare*] all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Chant 109 Psalm cxlvi. *Randall*
2nd Lesson. Titus ii. 11-14.

Hymn 375 "Who is on the Lord's side?"

Offertory and Solo:

"The morning prayer" (Eli) *Costa*
Miss LUCIE JOHNSTONE.

In the congregation were visitors from Aberdeen, Belfast, Dibrugarh (India) Langholme, Lenzie, Maidstone, Melbourne, Mossley, Newport, Norwich, Penryn (Cornwall), Port Dinorwic, Ramsbury, Rockhampton, Salford, Springs (Transvaal), Sunderland, Swansea, Sydney (N.S.W.), and many London churches.

[*Thursday Morning, November 15th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, wilt Thou in Christ Jesus Thy Son, our only Saviour, make us a new creation? If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature, with a new name, with a new purpose. Wilt Thou graciously work in us this miracle of transformation? We were in the captivity of Satan, we lived in the house of darkness, we were given over to work all manner of sin with greediness; all we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way. Wilt Thou forgive us because of the greatness of the Cross? can the blood of Thy Son wash out such stains as ours? was the fountain opened in the house of David intended to remain open? does mercy endure for ever? can it embrace us in all its holy redeeming purpose? Wilt Thou answer us now that we tarry at the Cross, and help us to believe that even our sin cannot exceed the grace that redeemed the world? We want a great view of Thy grace, we would see all Thy love, but we know it is impossible to see it all. Wilt Thou work mightily within us and upon us in the spirit of redemption? We know Thou canst destroy, Thou canst crush and stamp out of existence, but this is not the working of Thy love. We pray Thee, therefore, to come to us through the ministry of the Cross, and give us a new nature and a new name, and write Thine own name in letters of light upon our foreheads, that men may know that our Companion is the Lord. Amen.

CXIV.

NAME AND SURNAME.

"Simon the leper."—MATT. xxvi. 6.



WHY these surnames? We do not want them, we do not like them; but there they are. Why not say "Simon," and let his identification be established by other means than by recalling the loathsomeness of the disease? Why these expansions of names, why these fringes and attachments? Why not identify men by something better than leprosy, or evil deed, or red shame of any kind?

We fall here upon a very profitable scene of investigation and instruction. There seems to be some policy in this way of naming men; this is no bare accident. If this were the only instance we might pass it by with some swiftness and without any critical concern, but it is far from being the only case; it is one of a series or group of cases. Therefore there must be some principle running through this manner of naming men, of attaching to them certain antecedents which it is impossible for them to shake off. What is the meaning of it all? Why not regard the man as healed? Why not keep his health before us as a living memory, and let the leprosy perish even as a reminiscence? Why not look at the new skin? His skin may have come again like the flesh of a little child, and yet he is pelted on both sides of the river by the reminiscence of his once leprosy. God permits it, God has a purpose in it; it would be useful to us if we could discover the working of that purpose. It may be a purpose of humiliation, chastening, and an aspect of electing, choosing, sanctifying grace. Can it be for ever? Is it only for one little time-day—those little blots upon eternity? Are we yonder, as well as here, to be reminded of our sackcloth, our leprosy, our covered mouths, our loathsome, pestilential con-

dition of body? Is this language limited to this day, to the little wasting time-sphere? or does it follow us into the milleniums celestial and the air that never was tainted by any taint of evil? Do we like to be followed by our antecedents? Do we feel gratified when our yesterdays are piled into epithets and hurled at us by every malicious and cruel tongue? Yet here these names are, in the Holy Book; it is a method of nomenclature, it is a philosophy of appellation, yea, it is a whole theology of reminder. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death, or from this deadly body? How can I cut off this foul and pestilent carcass of the past? Am I always to be reminded that my name was Saul the persecutor? I would rather hear of being Paul the Apostle; but it would seem to be a development and purpose of providence that we should keep the past until we are fit to get rid of it.

Let us take instances. "Matthew the publican." Why remind a man that he was a publican or tax-gatherer? Why remind a man of days that he wants to forget? Yet there is the reminder. We are quoting Scripture, we are not picking up the nicknames which evil-speaking people have thrown at the apostle and disciple. In the new covenant he is called "Matthew the publican." But I am Matthew the disciple. Yes, but you are also Matthew the publican; be humble, you are known, your reminiscences are the living talk of the circle amidst which you work and run. Why was this said to the man? He is no longer a publican, he left the receipt of custom, washed his hands of it; but still he is Matthew the publican, the once-publican. He cannot wash his hands altogether in public esteem; there is no water, no nitre, no acid that can cleanse these foul parts. When a man had followed the Lord Jesus in this way is he not entitled to get rid of reminiscence of any shaming and painful character? Is a man always to be reminded that he was once a blasphemer? He ought to remind himself of that; there may be some greatness and wealthy fortune in the very reminiscences that we would gladly get rid of. Remember the hole, recall the mire, set up an image of the pit in your gayest parlour to remind you that you did not come down from heaven, though by the grace

of God you may be going up into it. Who does not know the painfulness of certain tormenting memories? Who likes to be reminded that he began the world on a very small scale? who likes to remember the village life, the difficult life, when we had to rise in the morning and make our own fire? Is it not better to be known as the resident lord, or patron, or squire, or mighty man of the place? Yes, there is something to be said for that; but remember the hole; put that upon your silver table, keep that in the very middle of your album, silver-cornered and richly embossed. You were once Simon the leper; remember it, and be kind to all lepers; "such were some of you." You were once Matthew the publican, the hard-natured, close-fisted tax-gatherer, felt to be an oppressor in the neighbourhood; remember, and be gentle.

The Lord was always talking thus to the people whom He made dear to His heart. He was saying to them every day almost, Remember thou also wast a stranger; bethink thee of the bondage days of old Egypt; recall the time when thou wouldst have been thankful for a mouthful of bread and a night's hospitable lodging; remember. There are men round thee to whom thou mayest show kindness for David's sake, for Jonathan's sake, for thy father's sake, for thy mother's sake, for auld lang syne's sake. The past will follow thee with name, and the intention of such pursuit is thy chastening, humbling; not a contemptuous humbling, but a stimulating and comforting humbling, so that thou mayest get rid of the old rags and put on the garments of duty. There must be a policy in this.

Take another instance, "Rahab the harlot." Why torment the woman by such memories? Was it not enough to call her "Rahab who received the spies"? Why is her sin to be even blackened and deepened and thrust in her face as a present-day memory and almost a present-day fact, so hot the breath, so damning the recollection? But this is the way; there must be a purpose in it. We cannot be satisfied until we find out the way into the heart of that purpose: always reminding a man that he was born blind, always refreshing his memory with the fact that once he had to beg his bread even at the beautiful gate of the temple;

always reminding the soul that it was just as bad once as any other soul ever could be. Why these painful, shocking, heart-cutting reminiscences and reminders? She was saved by faith, yet she was Rahab the harlot. Again and again it is forced upon us that there must be some meaning in all this, that a certain process has not yet been completed. Regeneration has been completed, blessed be God, but resurrection has yet to begin; regeneration is completed, consummated, crowned by resurrection, the old foul body left with the worms, and the new body, that is to say, the heavenly and the spiritual, has assumed the wedding garment, made fit for the wedding feast.

“The twelve” (1 Cor. xv. 5). The expression startles us; where is Judas? He was supposed to have betrayed and murdered the Master, and yet in this reckoning his name is not left out. That is the better side of the thought. Not only is our leprosy remembered, but our once-loyalty, our once-beauty of soul. How could there be “twelve” when one had hanged himself and his reeking entrails were in the mud? Yet still twelve. The tribes were twelve, though Benjamin was in the Rock Rimmon; the tribes were twelve, though scattered abroad. James sent his epistle after them, and knew that somehow that epistle would find them out wherever they were, for they were in the palm of God. So it is with families. “We are seven.” It is our family. But four out of your seven children are not with you? Yes, they are with us, and we would not be rid of them, they make the house balmy and warm, and they shine through all the rain and smite our heads with the gracious blow of mid-day and mid-summer, the light that crowns. That is another application of the text. Neither application is complete in itself. “The twelve,” though Judas was in a traitor’s grave. And so God will accomplish the number of the elect, will see that not one is wanting. God does not like vacant seats, gaps, hollow places; He says, Where is that little child that sat here? where is that sweet old mother that was a blessing on the feast even when not a word was spoken? where is that younger son that has gone out with his wallet and his allowance? Find him; let the world stand still until the one wanting man is pro-

duced. That is the Gospel, the great cry of the Redeemer.

How is it that men are in the habit of fixing single epithets upon complex characters? We have all been guilty of doing this. Perhaps there was a purpose in it that lay beneath or above our consciousness. We have called Jeremiah "the weeping prophet." Who told us? He was as buoyant a soul as ever lived; none could blow the trumpet more buoyantly and resonantly than Jeremiah. But it has pleased a narrow, one-eyed and squinting criticism to see him only in one aspect; and you never can drive out of the muddle-headed brains of some people the idea that Jeremiah was a weeping prophet. Why not be just to men? Why not see all their sides? They say that Moses was a meek man—Moses the meek one. If I were called upon to furnish a few sentences that have in them almost everything but meekness, I would find them in the speeches of Moses. And we say "Job the patient." Engage me to produce a page of impatiences, fretfulnesses, the most irritable of irritability, and I will go at once to the book of Job, whom we have called the man of patience. Why not see all the aspect of a man? Why not be bigger than we are? It hurts the grudging heart of envy to think that any man can do more than one thing. You have only to get up high enough in the world to be murdered. So long as you are on the level ground it is not worth while throwing a stone at you, it would be like shooting barn-door fowls, it would be too humbling to the shooter, who would not mention the vile murder when he went home to his own family circle. But if any man in all this wonderful Bible has climbed up by the grace and power of God and has had his wings developed so that his soul can fly in the midday and seek the gate of the morning and hover near the evening star, then is the time for sharp-shooting and maddest cruelty.

So then we must take the case in both its aspects. Simon the leper, Paul the apostle, this is the woman out of whom seven devils were cast. Oh, do not talk always about the seven devils, they are gone; she is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Do not torment your-

selves by too morbid a reference to and brooding on the melancholy past. Some of us could think of the past until our very brain reeled; sometimes the long yesterdays seem to follow us and shape themselves into a dagger that seeks our heart's blood. Many Christians torment themselves by reminding themselves that they were Naaman the leper, Simon the leper, Matthew the publican, Rahab the harlot, Judas. You may be doing a grave injustice to the grace of God by such morbid reflection. Let me preach a gospel to you whilst we tarry on the roadside for one brief moment. You have told me about the leper, the publican, the harlot, the blind; may I speak to you? I have a letter for you; this is the letter, and you must put it in your heart, and look at it, when the enemy is hard upon you:—"Where sin abounded grace did much more abound." Why not look at the two sides? Why make so much of your little self and so little of the infinite Saviour? Why not hear the sweet voice of the infinite Priest when He says, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee"?—match My Cross against thy sin, and take thy sin and by My sustaining grace cast it into the infinite sea of My pity and grace. Some are subject to bondage through their whole lifetime through fear of death; and again others are subject to bondage through a morbid remembrance of sins that were blotted out, and the sun was witness to the obliteration. Do not tell me any more, and I will not tell myself, God helping me, about our once being Naaman the leper, or Simon the leper, or Matthew the publican, or Rahab the harlot, or Judas the betrayer; we were all these, and we would have done more if we could against God and light and truth, but the sky is still bigger than any star that throbs in its bosom.

If we turn over a few pages of the New Testament we shall find that God gives His people a new name. He gives some of them a name which no man can read but the bearer thereof. Sometimes He will give us a name that will have no evil associations attaching to it. The name "sinner" will be forgotten, and no man will say to another in the city celestial, Is not this he that sat and begged? No; in that great home-city there shall be no such reminder, for the former

things are passed away. Neither shall there be any limiting names. We have now private addresses, we are sometimes almost proud of local identity; again and again we feel a rising of a smothered pride when we are recognised as occupying this or that great position in the state, in the church, in the world. All these limiting names are to be abolished. The name of husband, wife, child, citizen, politician, prime minister, head of the state, king, queen, kaiser, and czar, and president, all shall be done away, when all the stars have shrunk out of sight at the rising of the summer sun. In the resurrection they are neither married nor give in marriage, but are as the angels of God. We are now in the time-sphere, we are in the body-world, we are passing through the clay-house, where God has been making wet dust into such a shape as will give the best hint possible of His own image and likeness. All these things shall be done away; this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and death shall be swallowed up, forgotten, in victory. We take no leprous garment into heaven, our evil deeds we leave far behind us—behind the back of God. Said the gracious Lord to His sinning but penitent Israel, “I will cast thy transgressions behind Me,” and no line has been found that can measure the distance indicated by that word “behind.” Then let us hope for liberation or redemption, full, complete.

Let us also be careful how even now we cast evil and painful memories in the face of those who are saved. It is cruel of us to remind any man that he was once a liar, and blasphemer, and a drunkard. “It any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature.” Then give him his new name. There are men so cruel that they would bind other men down upon the damp grave of the past, and allow them to perish there. Why not bring all the sunshine you can into poor lives? The men who have sinned so deeply know it better than you know it, they feel it more than you can feel it; the sinner saved knows better what sin is than the sinner unsaved can ever know in that condition. Encourage anyone that wants to get away from the unholy past; say to such an one, I can tell thee where there is balm, I know where

the Physician lives: shall I help thee? There is balm in Gilead, and there is a Physician there, and both are at thy disposal: come! That would be true preaching, great, penetrating, healing preaching. How difficult it is for some men to really get rid of the devil! We are variously constituted in this regard; the devil seems to have got hold through and through of some natures that have even taken upon themselves the name of Christ. They cannot bear that another man should be praised; they cannot endure that another man should be more prosperous than they are; their very prayers are choked by envy; they have a hard time of it, and if so be they are struggling to get away from those seven devils let us not reproach them, but encourage them in their high attempt, and say, In the grace of God, try again, and speak comfortably to them, and say, There is forgiveness in exchange for penitence; fight on, and fight to the end.

If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature, and being a new creature he has a new name, and that name is the Name above every name, it is none other than the dear Jesus. He permits us to wear His name, we write our own poor name and changeable address upon our poor cards of exchange and civility, but we have in the heart, so to say, another writing, bearing another Name, without any limiting address, we bear the name of Jesus Christ. In the largest sense let us be, each of us, a new creature. What would you say to any man who took the little shoes a friend wore when he was a babe and should say to him, You put these on, you keep to the level of those shoes; do not attempt to be so great a figure as your ambition would desire to work out, but remember babyhood and the nursery and helplessness? It would be poor challenging, it would be mean thus to remind a man of his far-off infancy. By the grace of God he is a new creature; by the grace of God he has received a new name; by the grace of God shown in the Cross of Christ he is a new soul, and his one desire is that he may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that he may attain to the eminence and the security of heaven.

[*Sunday Morning, November 25th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we thank Thee for the sanctuary. We love to come to the centre of things, it is warmer there the outside world is cold and rough, but within the appointed place there is rest. The rest which Thou givest is peace indeed ; we have heard of a peace which passeth all understanding, and that peace Thou dost give to us in Christ Jesus the Lord. The outside is full of rottenness and dead men's bones, it is full of lies and calculated hypocrisies and disappointments keen and fatal. The whole world lieth in the wicked one, and yet Thine eyes are upon it with a view to redemption and ultimate sanctification. We are not lost in the great confusion ; Thou hast given Thy people who love Thee in Christ Jesus the Lord a central place, an inviolable security. Thou dost by this medium of human saintship and fealty keep the world together until the time has come to burn it. Not a hair of the heads of Thy people shall be singed ; Thou wilt save all who can be saved, and as for the rest, it is rottenness and death. We bless Thee that we do not know the language which is talked by many who blaspheme Thy name ; their words are not our words ; in some measure we have been taught of Jesus, we love His words, they are flowers, dewdrops and stars and songs, and they live when the lights are put down and all human insincerity has gone home to aggravate its hypocrisy. We bless Thee for all simple-minded, frank-hearted, little-childlike men who speak the words of love and look the look of light, and help us in the dark time when the night is sevenfold. We bless Thee in Christ Jesus our Lord for Thy holy book. We know it to be Thine, no other book speaks like it, knows us so well, ministers to us so helpfully and comfortingly, we know in our own souls that Thy book is the revelation of God's heart. We are delighted with a great delight to be near the altar, to hear the sweet tunes of long ago, and to have awakened in our hearts the memories which are inspirations and sources of strength. God be thanked for all this lavish display of the wealth of heaven. We pray in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord, itself a prayer, a great cry to the throne, an appeal to Thy pity and love. This name is above every name ; in it are all the little children, all the sins, miseries, weaknesses of this mortal life, all the songs and hopes and triumphs which are yet to be wrought out by the power of the Cross. We will by Thy grace keep our love of this name, it is something to hold by, we are enabled by the name of Christ to walk through perilous places.

If Christ will come with us we shall not know how many miles there are on the road, it will be but a step between us and Thine own glowing heart, Thou centre of love, Thou Spirit of redemption. We come to be baptised by the Holy Ghost; other ghosts have frightened, but the Holy Ghost is a smile in the heavens, a warm summer breeze in the winter air, quite something to stand near and hold on to when our ears are deafened with uproar, and the abyss beneath seems unfathomable. The Lord in Christ help us; everything is so uncertain; the little flower withers and never knows what it is to be full-blown; those we relied on are broken staves, and the people who intended to stay until eventide were cut off in the early afternoon. O strange life, despair and utterest misery but for Christ, who makes all things new and helps through the winter, and does not leave us even when the gate of summer is open. O sweet, sweet Christ, abide with us, and there shall be no gnawing hunger, no tear that does not reflect the smile of Christ. Amen.

CXV.

GOD WITH THE UNGODLY.

Ana when the Lord raised them up judges, the Lord was with the judge.—
JUDGES ii. 18.



HERE is a great principle here, which runs far. That great principle is, God will not forsake the work of His own hands. Only be assured with adequate proof that this or that matter is divine, and leave the rest. "When the Lord raised up judges, the Lord was with the judge," because they were the work of His own hand. God never dies. But if any man makes himself a judge the Lord will not be responsible for that man. That is the whole scheme of life. We cannot build out God; though we pile our judges high and lay them in great breadths like walls meant to be impregnable, it is all of no use; whatever it is, it is a poor thing, and not worthy of our notice, and as for our trust, woe to the man who thinks that straw, loose dry straw, can stand against the lava-flood. It cannot be done, but fools will have it so; they are behind the straw, they

think all is secure, they suppose that they have practically built out God; and lo, the fire falls and the straw helps the very destruction it was meant to avert.

The great principle then is this: God will not forsake what He Himself has begun, authorised, directed, chosen. This then is the light by which to examine our securities, take them out one by one and hold this candle over them. This principle applies to all that makes up our little life. Except the Lord keep the safe-key the thief will break through and steal all the paper and all the wealth; yea, you may appoint twelve constables, three at each corner, and the wealth will go; it was not well secured, it was not honestly earned, it has no worthy moral history, and it will go, and you cannot help it, and I am as a bruised reed were I to attempt to co-operate with you against the Lord. If the Lord has chosen us to do this or that work, then all will be well, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary; you cannot cut down any tree that God has planted. May He plant us, may we be trees of the Lord's right-hand planting; then we shall be well planted and planted in the right places, and all the rivers will come to bathe us as with a blessing, and a benediction, and our leaf shall not wither.

This puts God in His right place; this asserts and illustrates the sovereignty of God. That is one of the terms that I should not like to become obsolete. Once it was quite a great instrument in the hand of the Church; the Church was strong in the possession of that conviction, the conviction, namely, that there is one God, one throne, one Providence, and that any who would set himself or themselves against God's eternal providence and sovereignty would simply be carried away as with a flood, and the sea would reject them, and they would be without a place. Why do we not rest upon these great rock truths? why are we always in panic and in fear? how is it that men will build upon bog and sand, and not upon the rock? What is the rock? The sovereignty of God; the nearness of the Sovereign, the beneficence of His rule, the love that runs through and accounts for His great

ministry of redemption. Some people have no abiding place in any sense whatever; they have no great principles; they will belong to this church to-day, and to a contradictory church to-morrow; they will walk on both sides of the street, hoping to pick up something from the one side or the other; they will adopt any floating, mutable fashion or vogue; they have no central principle, no foundation rock: what wonder that they fray away into littleness, insecurity, and incertitude of soul, and have no answer when the enemy comes in like a flood? I wish all our people had one certain great conviction, one solemn conviction about which there is no doubt. That would do to begin with. The difficulty is to deal with those spongy souls that take hold nowhere, that have no conception, philosophy, conviction. Who can make anything of such people? We repair them only that they may fall to pieces again; they live, if living it may be called, in a state of continual dilapidation. History says, When the Lord raised up judges, the Lord was with the judges. If He has raised any of us to a position whatsoever, then He will see to it, in the exercise of His sovereignty, that we have strength enough, sagacity enough, faculty enough; our supplies are from heaven, and are not dependent upon the mutability and the sad uproar of things that know not that God is on the throne. We try to manage our own little affairs; the bread we eat is not bread; we are afflicted with a kind of spiritual diabetes; all things come to nothing, we get no sustenance out of the wheatfield, and the vineyards do but confuse our minds. What do we require? what is the one thing to get hold of? that God is, that all things are in His hands, and that we cannot set aside the operation, minute, critical, profound, eternal, of His gracious providence. O soul, if thou couldst lean on that one staff, other staff thou needest not. But to be uncertain at every point, to allow the devil to play with us along the whole line of our intellectual and spiritual constitution, that is unmanliness, and that is life without profit.

Secondly, the judge recognised the fact that God was with him. He did not live a life of vanity and ambition; he set a proper value upon his seat. If all our

great men and leaders would know that they are where God has put them, many great and beneficent results would come out of that conviction. The judge recognised that he was sent. We do not fully understand that word sent in all its meaning. We think sometimes that it is the church that sends the minister. It is not. How can they run except they be sent? Yes, but by whom? Not by you and me, not by any little club and coterie. Sent by whom? By Him who sends the stars in their courses, sent by the living God. The church will not have that interpretation; it says in its own gasping tone, Of course they cannot go except they be sent. That is quite true: but sent by whom? If they are sent by us, we cannot guarantee that the Lord will be with them. The Lord must choose His own ministers, evangelists, prophets, apostles, and missionaries; and if He sends them, God will be with them. We cannot always tell how His nearness will be verified. He did not seem to be near Stephen when he was stoned to death, but He was; He enabled Stephen to utter the second greatest prayer ever uttered by suffering man. The first was offered on Golgotha, and Stephen offered the second, and offered it in the spirit of Him who prayed the first prayer for forgiveness and for acceptance into the heavenly kingdom. It does appear sometimes that God is not with the judge, but it is in appearance only; look not on the outward appearance; the root is in the ground, hidden, not open to the gaze of casual observation and criticism.

Being sent, the judge or the representative of God is qualified. The qualification is in his being sent. God chooses no unsuitable instruments; God is not responsible for the tools and the working of those whom He never called to the judgeship, or sent into the pulpit, or conducted into parliament, or set in high places in the cities of commerce. Do not overload the Lord. If He has sent any man to the position which that man occupies, be it low, be it high, the Lord will be with the judge, and will justify Himself at evening-tide. Being sent and qualified in this divine way, the judge will have nothing to boast of; nor will he be inclined to boast, he will continually hear the question, What hast thou that thou hast not received? Man,

the robe thou wearest was woven in heaven; thy voice has a note from the upper minstrelsy, and all thou hast thou dost hold as a steward, and God will call thee to account. What a different life it would be if we could recognise these things! but whoever hears a wise word at any table? whoever hears a solemn and profound reflection, except in the closest and devoutest companionship of souls? If we realised that we were sent we should have no fear; the Lord does not send us without going with us; there will be no cowardliness, saying, There is a lion in the way. We shall not see the lion because of the glory of the Lord in whose shining all beasts and reptiles are lost as if they never existed. We need some such tonic as this. The world is against the Cross. Christ to-day is at the bottom of the poll, He is outvoted as to mere numbers by the false prophets and by those who have no heaven but in inventions of their own. Yet all is well; it is the Lord that directs the flux of time; to Him a thousand years are as one day, and one day is as a thousand years, and the Lord will bring it in about the time of evening twilight. Why do we trouble ourselves about all these arrangements? And why do we accelerate ecclesiastical trains? and why show our perspiring impatience about the way in which the kingdom of God is revealing itself? It is the kingdom of God; that is enough, that is an argument and that is a history. O rest in the Lord; sit down, slumber awhile on the breast of the Infinite Love. We lead men best when we follow God most.

In the third place, all true public appointments, and true social economies and policies, prove their divinity by their real prosperity. That is a dangerous doctrine if treated roughly, if not qualified and commended by some severe reservations. We must first of all know what prosperity is. I have endeavoured to secure my argument by the use of the word true or real, genuine, thorough prosperity. Not the prosperity of froth, not the prosperity of noise, not the prosperity of mere numbers, but another kind of prosperity; it may be marked by profound spiritual quietness, by the utter absence of display, it may at times appear to be anything but prosperity. "Thou

fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." Do not take up the seed whilst in a putrid state, to inquire or ascertain how the germination is proceeding. It is God who undertakes the germination of living seed; we have but to sow it, and to commit it to the great priesthood of nature, that marvellous ministry of medium and intermedium, and in due time God will grow the harvest, and that which was once black and rotten shall yield that which is yellow, golden, living, bread, nodding in the winds, shining in the heavens. Do let many things alone; in many cases, break up your committees and annihilate your most acutely and exquisitely invented machinery. God is a jealous God, and He will hardly allow us to put up the scaffolding, much less to shape and to secure the living and imperishable building.

It is a curious fact—I almost tremble in mentioning it—that if the Lord is not with any church, that church must go down; if the Lord is not the very soul and spirit of any doctrine, that doctrine will be proved to be a fancy, an evening's sport, and to-morrow it will be forgotten. No false doctrine can last. It proves its own insufficiency, it is a theory for a day, it is a suggestion for a holiday or a sunny hour; it is not a philosophy that grasps the whole case and guides everything by an inner and divine power. Here again we are thrown back and kept severely to the acceptance of the definition of true prosperity. Two or three may have the right doctrine, and may be only two or three. I recall that hasty expression, and I delete the word "only." There cannot be two or three "only" when the truth is in case, and when stewardship is developed on the part of two or three; the number then is four. I see three men walking, and a fourth like unto the Son of man: He cools the fire, He turns it into a bed of flowers, He smiles in partial contempt, and in partial pity upon the men who lighted the fire and attempted to burn the kingdom of righteousness. There may be for a time a great multitude gathered around false doctrine. It is only for a time. All false things give way; they do not live in the morning and in the evening which constitute a day; they are of no use in the night time, they only make our poverty the poorer by showing

their own want of resource and efficiency. You have seen the wicked in great power, spreading himself like a green bay tree ; yet he passed away, and lo, he was not ; yea, psalmists sought, and he could not be found.

Then how is it when a doctrine is true it does not bring the whole world to it at once ? We cannot explain that ; the word education has many syllables in it ; it is not a word of three or four syllables only, it comprises many considerations, possibilities, inter-relations, and outworkings of the most complicated kind. God has undertaken the whole, and we must leave Him to work it out to its close. There have been doctrines that have drawn crowds for a time, there have been programmes that have been scattered in thousands, there have been indoor meetings and outdoor meetings for the propagation of new schemes and socialisms, and for a time all seemed to rattle and advance ; there has been a false theology, and God has taken care that it could never pay its own expenses. There have been few people there, respectable, nothing less than silk in their garments, and there may have been purple and velvet and fine linen, but the wretched thing, born out of wedlock, born without the fatherhood of God, born an orphan, has starved the very people which it promised to pet and to bring to high consequence and triumph, and man by man has dropped off because the heart can only live upon truth and light and love. The Cross has been standing for centuries, and many a wayworn traveller puts up at that hostelry ; the rich drive back, drive on, the rich wag their heads still at the grim Cross ; they are going down to some flaunting hotel in the valley, they will be well fed beasts, but when they realise their manhood and their sin, and all the depth and urgency of their need, they will come back and tarry at the sign of the Cross.

When the Lord raised up judges, the Lord was with the judge ; and He is with every true teacher, merchant, member of parliament, and leader of every sort and kind, who is in himself earnestly desirous above all things to be true to truth and loyal to the throne. This is the true authority of the Church. God with the Church is enough ; it needs no written

authentication, it is entirely independent of certificates and attestations, the attestors signing in the presence of one another. Oh that God would come back! Shall we say, Oh that we might all pray that He would condescend to return? There are persons who make out that this or that society or association is apostolic. Nothing of the kind; do not believe those weary papers that persuade you that you are built as a church upon apostolic lines; it is not true, except in little parts and parcels of the case. Here and there we seem to be apostolic, but when we come to examine the whole thing in all its issues and so-called developments, we parted company early in the day with the apostles, and we have now come to compromises and resolutions and re-arrangements, and we live, if live at all, on tinkered amendments. If we are going to be apostolic do let us go back to the apostles as their life is written, as their records are indicated in the New Testament. But do not be a little apostolic here, and a little apostolic there, and in between be yourselves. Let it be all or none. Do let us be sincere if we cannot be original; let us be honest if we cannot be great.

One final word showing that the reverse of the text is true. When the Lord did not raise up the preacher, teacher, legislator, statesman, merchant, leader, the Lord never went a step on the road with the man. Oh, if the Lord did not make the preacher, the Lord will never appear in a single sermon; if the Lord did raise up the preacher, all the opponents that righteousness ever had cannot put him down. That is true of all life; it is not an affirmation about preachers only, we make the affirmation for the sake of the broad, yea, the universal, principle. If God has made you a teacher, do not trouble yourself about the criticism passed upon you on the outside. If the Lord has made you a literary man, and found you your inkhorn and your pen, do not trouble to know what anybody thinks about your work. If the Lord has made you an interpreter of human life in any way, it is not your business to be listening at the window to ascertain what Mr. Nobody, who thinks himself to be somebody, thinks about you. If the Lord called you

to this service, in the kitchen, in the parlour, in the shop, in the senate-house, in the pulpit, the Lord will be with the judge.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, abide in our hearts; then shall we know that the Lord Himself is with us. Amen.

SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 25TH, 1900.

Voluntary	...	...	...	"Andante"	...	...	Hesse
Anthem 13	...	...	...	"Like as the hart"	...	...	Novello
The Lord's Prayer.— <i>Field.</i>							
Hymn 548	...	"In Thy Name, O Lord, assembling."					
1st Lesson. Malachi iii. 16-17.							
Chant 83	...	...	...	Psalm ciii.	...	...	Mornington
2nd Lesson. Rev. xx. 11-13.							

11. And I saw a great white throne [*not made with hands*], and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away [*so afraid! the unknown and unnamed wind would not let them stop anywhere; drove them on like dry sand*]; and there was found no place for them [*and no need for them*].

12. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God [*and all this was spectacular; then the action came*]; and the books were opened [*an unsuspected library*]: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works [*every man reading and signing his own record*].

Anthem ... "I will mention" ... Sullivan

I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us. For He said, Surely they are My people, children that will not lie; so He was their Saviour. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old. So didst Thou lead Thy people, to make Thyself a glorious name. Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory: where is Thy zeal and Thy strength? Doubtless Thou art our Father: Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; Thy name is from everlasting. Amen.—ISAIAH lxiii. 7-9, 14-16.

Solo: Mr. WILLIAM A. SHEEN.

Prayer.

Hymn 231 ... "The Spirit breathes upon the word."

Sermon.

Offertory and Cornet So'o:

"But Thou didst not leave" ... (Messiah) Handel

Mr. GEORGE HARLOW.

Hymn 410 ... "Jesus, still lead on."

Benediction and Threefold Amen.—*Comnod.*

Voluntary ... "Capriccio and Fugato" ... Knecht

[*Sunday Morning, December 2nd, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, our Father and Saviour, we come to Thee at the Cross. That is the meeting place between God and man ; we would be reconciled unto God by the life and death, the resurrection and the priesthood of the Son. We have thought of this until our hearts have been weary and sad with almost despair. It is not in man to save himself. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thine help." This is the promise that we plead ; by this light we walk, by this power we recover ourselves from the pit of despair. We own the self-destruction, we did it all, we did it willingly, wantonly, but now that the serpent has bitten us and the fire has scorched us we begin to feel that we were wrong. Thus by judgment dost Thou bring us to consideration, by pain dost Thou lead us into the sanctuary of prayer. When we had no consciousness of sin we went forward in our own way, but when sin was revealed to us and all its consequences, we felt the burning and the stinging, the shame and the self-helplessness, and we began to cry out before we began to pray. Thou dost accept these beginnings ; Thou art condescending, and Thou dost therefore receive these elementary cries and sighings and wonderings of sorrow ; then Thou dost by Thy Holy Spirit teach us how to pray. We said, God be merciful unto us sinners ! and our hearts were made glad, our burden was not only lightened but removed ; when we touched the Cross we began our ascent to heaven. We have been reading about this man whose garments were red, and about Another who sat on the white horse, his name Faithful and True, and behold there was about him a vesture dipped in blood, and his name was The Word of God. This is Thy Son in whose name we pray, this is our Saviour, our security, and our delight. How sweet is the name of Jesus ; it survives all other names, all other names it would sanctify ; it is the name that is above every name when it is fully grown. One day we shall know it to be so, and shall join in the great hallelujah, the infinite anthem, that shakes the temple of the heavens. We bless Thee for all religious hopes, we thank Thee for the power of aspiration, we would not relinquish this faculty of groping after God, this outputting of searching hands in the black and grievous darkness, if haply they may touch the Son of God. Help us, therefore, to aspire, and

to grow in grace and in knowledge, and to seek the living Lord, that we may be no longer alone and in bitter distress. We thank Thee for what we do know of Jesus Christ ; He has been preached to us as good news, a sound of gladness, an utterance of joy, and wherein we have been enabled to receive Thy Son we have been made free and glad because in some measure pure and desirous to be wholly sanctified. The way is rough, difficult, and perilous ; this is the way of life that slopes down with suddenness to the grave. There are thieves hidden under the shadows of the trees ; every leaf is a possible enemy, every time we put forth our foot to approach Thee we know not that we can set it down again, so bitter, so cruel, so crafty is the enemy. Yet this is the way of life, this is the way as our sin has often made it ; but where sin abounds grace doth much more abound ; mercy rejoiceth against judgment ; there is more grace than sin because there is more God than man. We bless Thee for occasional spiritual rapture, for an occasional sense of Thy nearness and certitude of the fulfilment of Thy promises. Bless those who are in the sere and yellow leaf, the man who has his seventy years and more has his memories and his monitors full of encouragement and often full of shame and distress. And bless the little child that has begun to wonder and almost to pray. We bless Thee for these baby spirits, they keep the world young, and they cleanse the air by sending through it the music of young-heartedness. And regard the man who is still in the midst of his toil, often disappointing, the evening bringing with it no harvest and the whole day an area of toil and sacrifice and disappointment. And be with those who have love of home deeply in their hearts ; they would keep the house together ; it is little, but it is theirs, and it has a history, and in it is a mystic altar, and in its fire are pictures which the heart can read. The Lord save the little houses and the struggling families ! and we bless Thee that Thou hast made great men glad to help men who are not so great ; we thank Thee for Christian hands spread out in royal bounty towards poverty and helplessness. We bring all our sick folk and lay them before Jesus. We do not hope much for them in this life ; sometimes for their own sakes we wish the chariot would come. Thou knowest the mystery of pain, Thou canst read the unwritten desires and sorrows of the heart. We leave all with Thee ; by and by it shall all be well ; in due time when the struggle is over Thou wilt give each of Thy children the morning star. Amen.

CXVI.

MERCY AND JUDGMENT.

"Mercy rejoiceth against judgment."—JAMES ii. 13.



HEY are both true; they are both great facts in human history and experience. Long ago a man said, "My song shall be of mercy and judgment." Surely he was a great anthem-maker who could bring them both into tune. He did it, and he was

right. Judgment seems to be an appalling word, and in many aspects it is indeed appalling. We really do not make true progress if we extrude what are called the appalling elements and features and characteristics of life. It is not healthy progress, it is a kind of ambling; there may be a motion more or less useful in its purpose, but it is a poor movement, it is the flying of a crippled bird. But men are so foolish in the matter of being disinclined to look facts in the face; they would rather cover them up, and by a criminal concealment of reality would live in a fool's paradise. He is a healthy man, healthy of soul, who by the grace of God is enabled to look everything straight in the face, and to inquire whence it came, what it means, whither it goes. We do ourselves grievous injustice by putting our fingers in our ears and shutting out the cries that ought to pierce our hearts. We also do great injustice to ourselves by not listening to our own souls when they have a complaint, and when they challenge our attention to its solemn utterance. Believe me, it is not life when you drown your sorrow in drink; it is not really, truly life when you hide away the things that would startle and whiten and paralyse you. Have them out, look at them, touch them, number them, estimate their force, calculate their meaning, and be wise. You cannot get away from judgment. If you do not realise it in one way you will realise it mayhap in some other way;

it will come upon us, not as a bolt from heaven—that fearsome bolt that makes cowards of us all—it may come in the form of silent self-remorse. Who can escape that most trying of all penalties? No man can hurt me from without; his words have no effect upon my life if my life be honest and clean before God. The judgment that is to be feared is the self-judgment, that peculiar penetrating judgment that will not let us drink the very wine in which we have pledged our hope. How impossible to kill the serpent of self-torment, self-remorse! We did that deed; we would fain forget it, but memory is a ghost that traverses the roads of the night and turns upon us at unexpected points and says, You did it, you know you did it, and you cannot undo it, and you are guilty before God. You neglected that life that you have now lost; you know you might have been much kinder. Do not whine about it; she is gone! You know you did not treat the little child as you might have treated the little panting life; why, there was hardly a kiss on its wan face, hardly one kiss-mark on that soft little mouth. That makes life hideous. Not some ghost of the imagination, but some ghost of memory—memory! There we may be sitting or standing psalm-singing and looking as if we were religious, when the whole road behind us is strewn with wreckage for which we are responsible.

Do not suppose that we can escape this matter of judgment by some metaphysical argument: man! the matter is in thee, in thy soul, in thy blood; why shirk it, why flinch from the fact? How many there are who want to escape the Church and all that the Church means by getting up some little bubbling frothy argument about abstractions and a species of pseudo-metaphysics. If they would but look right into the very centre of their own hearts they may see murder. There are bloodless murders, thou cruel white face—murders of neglect, of injustice. There be many manslaughterers who never stood in the dock. And as for vow-breaking and the scattering of oaths, who is guiltless before the white throne of acknowledged righteousness? That is one aspect of judgment—self-torment. We have many fine speeches about the possibility of God pardoning the sinner. Do not talk

about that ; first talk about the sinner pardoning himself. That is the difficulty even after Divine pardon. God has pardoned us through the Cross of His dear Son, He has looked at us through the crimson medium of Calvary, and He has said mayhap, My son, thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee. Yes, but, Thou Almighty One, I cannot forgive myself ; I am glad with a kind of grim gladness that I have been forgiven away in the eternities, but I cannot forgive myself ; I did the wrong deed, and Thou must qualify me, so to say, to forgive myself ; I would accept heaven's kind pardon, but I cannot forgive my own soul. How is that to be met ? I want to feed some little child because I neglected my own, but I seem to make no progress in feeding the child, the very food seems to be lost upon it : can I not have just one full round hour with my own child that I might try to make up to it what I neglected to give ? That would be a kind of pardon ; I thank Thee for Thy great pardon, now come to me and give me that kind of grace which will enable me to do on my side what Thou hast done on Thine. They tell me that I should accept God's pardon, and be happy : I cannot ! Let me remove by final and complete obliteration the cursed sprite that makes my heart black and my soul a burden of distress. Fools have come around me and told me to come with them, and all will be right ; they said, that one night with them, with the foaming vessels, with the kindly poison, and I should forget my sins. I did forget them for a few minutes, but the bottles were emptied, and the laughing fools had gone home, and I was left, and then there came up from beneath the table ghosts, memories, reminiscences of all kinds, and my head could stand no more of the accursed resurrection, and everything came back upon me blacker than ever, and I saw the child, and I thought I heard it, and I saw a shaking in the cloth, and heard a rattling in the empty glass ; and I could not forgive myself. There is judgment, the kind of judgment you cannot overcome in your own strength and never overcome all at once. It is the outworking of an experience, it is the completion of the finest tool-work of God's finest instrument upon the heart. This is not to be explained or to be

understood in words or by words; it is a great mystery, but it is a great answer.

People want to know if there is a hell. Certainly. Where is it? In you; that is where it is; in me, preacher of the Word; like all other preachers, his very soul is steeped in holy Scripture, and yet hot hell is in the man. Woe betide the soul that puzzles itself with such frivolities as, Is heaven a state or is heaven a place? No earnest mind can ask such questions; they are outside the fiery bounds of mere frivolity and curiosity. I have been in hell; it is the scorching of the self-accusing heart, it is the everlasting burning of the sin which the sinner himself cannot quench. You see, I did it: why speak to me words that do not relate to the fact? I will not be stroked and caressed and lulled, I will not fall under the influence of narcotic or appetite of any kind; I did it! Do not deny judgment.

Sometimes certain sufferings can only be expressed in terms of duration. They are poor terms, in themselves they are empty little words, but if we pile them sufficiently together they enable the soul to express its most agonistic and self-tormenting emotion. Therefore we say, "The worm that dieth not." I know it! "The fire that is not quenched." I feel it! Do not take me out to some valley near Jerusalem, and say it was a figure; take me into my own soul, where there are deeper valleys than there ever were in Jerusalem; I feel the gnawing of the worm undying, and I feel the torment that cannot be stilled but by the total Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Disastrous beyond all other hours are those in which we discuss some little theological metaphysic about judgment and sin and perdition: this knowledge can only come to the student in the great school of bitter experience. He knows what sin is by what his own sin is. Thank God that earnest mind has not come to the point when he makes sin a subject and explains it—sin in the abstract. Blessed is that scholar, a most hopeful student in the best of all schools, who says, My sin, my transgression, my iniquity. Now he is in no frivolous mood; at this moment he is in the right temper, he will come out

of that deep study of his with a lightened heart, for it hath pleased God in the plenitude of His grace to enable men by the true confession of sin—not to Himself only, but to the sinner's own soul, so to say, the soul in one phase standing in front of the soul in another phase, and turning out its black torrent of remembered iniquity,—it hath pleased God that after such confession there should come a strange calm, a deep holy peace, as if God had met us in life's extremest extreme and in the fulness of His ineffable pity had condescended to make us over again, to recreate us, to start us as it were from the root of His own heart.

“Mercy rejoiceth against judgment.” There are some persons who do not like to hear about judgment. They will never make any progress, and they are people not to be trusted; they are as Ephraim, a cake unturned; there is no reality of wisdom in such people; I mean the people who put their fingers in their ears, and say, Do not talk to me about judgment and about everlasting punishment and about all these horrible things: make me laugh! Never trust your money with such people, much less your souls. Let us have reality, let us have a true grip of our case, whatever the case may be, and if we have to hold the writhing serpent in our hands, grip it, O poor distressed soul, dig thy fingers into the beast, and try in God's strength to fling it into the flames. “Mercy rejoiceth against judgment.” Mercy says, I must follow all the sin and all the misery, and I must teach all these people to say, Where sin abounded grace did much more abound. I have a great message, quoth mercy, and I must be out and tell it to the sons of distress and the daughters of weeping misery. What is the message of mercy? Does it abolish the law? No, mercy says, I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. Mercy faces judgment, mercy recognises judgment; mercy never says, Never mind the law, do not think about the law. That is not the voice of Gospel mercy. We are taken by mercy itself to Sinai, with all its rocks and rocky lines, and then taken away until we come into green slopes, even the slopes of Mount Zion. We must pass through both experiences, some in

this degree, some in that. Sin is not the same thing to every soul. We do not all form the same estimate of sin. To one temperament, sin appears to be more than it does to another. So we cannot in merely general and promiscuous terms define sin and assign by precise appreciation its exact value. Some things must be left to consciousness, to experience, and to that mysterious accent which discriminates each man into his own individuality. Let no man therefore be discouraged because his experience is not like mine; I must not be discouraged because my experience is different from another man's experience. There is an inner or central quantity which belongs to us all. We are in a common condemnation, a common denominator includes us all, but the numerator has an accent, an expression, and value of its own.

Judgment is a matter within human limits which can be measured and satisfied. If it is a legal judgment, a man can bend his back and accept his punishment, and then stand up and challenge society to remind him of his expiated guilt. But there is another judgment that is not of the nature of social crime, but that spiritual judgment of the heart itself which is conducted in the sight of the living righteous God. Mercy is not mere sentiment; it is not a gush, it is a salvation. What does it save us from? That is a minor question, though a great one. What does it save us into? That is another interrogation, wide as heaven, lasting as duration. Have we sufficiently thought of the negative aspect of the gift of Christ? What is that negative aspect? It touches me to the quick; it is purely negative, but most suggestive and helpful as an initial idea. What is it? "That we might not perish." We can begin with that idea, it is initial, it will do to start with; it is only negative, but of great value. "He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish." That is a minus quantity, though it is important. Is there not a positive quantity? There is, and it follows immediately upon the very words that have been quoted—"but have everlasting life." As a mere intellectual conception it is very sublime. How condescendingly God approaches us! He does not come at once with the offer of all heaven, crowns and thrones, streets o

gold and walls of jasper, and diadem on diadem. That would be overpowering even to the most excited imagination. He comes with the offer in this form, You need not perish, Christ has come that you might not perish; that is the great purpose of His incarnation and the great expression of His love. We having received that initial idea, the Spirit proceeds: That is not enough, to be saved from perishing; Christ now offers you everlasting life. And the life is the security against the perishing. If it were possible for you to accept the offer in its merely negative aspect, your acceptance would wear itself out; you must have the positive quality, the living life, the life on life, the wave on wave of life, the life that is like a rolling billow which in its very incoming suggests to you exhaustlessness, infinite sufficiency.

Now mercy is not a mere sentiment, let us repeat, expressing a kind of goodnature which is only really happy when it is imposed upon. That is the kind of mushy, pithless so-called gospel we have sometimes heard. Think of it! mercy coming to the sinner and saying, You can do with me what you please, you can stand upon me, condemn me, there is no end to my goodnature; whatever you do I will cover it all up, and God's brightest sun shall not have rays bright enough to see the thing that is concealed. No! God does not work in that way. He does fundamental work; He says, we must be born again. He does not want reformed characters. He wants saved souls.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the very heart of God, be with us, to save us from despair, and lead us into the morning of hope. Amen.

[Thursday Morning, December 6th, 1900.]

Prayer.

ALmighty GOD, we need all Thy great words of promise. We live upon them as our hunger devours bread ; they are the word of the Lord, the Gospel of His heart, messages from the inner and upper sanctuary, and we receive them with glad and responsive hearts. Thou knowest the weariness and the bitterness of our life, Thou understandest the depth of the grave-pit ; Thou knowest all the litt'e lights and great lights that shine upon our strange way. It is all of Thy doing, we see it not immediately ; here and there we come upon dark and ghastly sights, but now and again is the light lifted and the fair morning shines upon us, and we are assured of Thy presence. Wherein we are weary do Thou comfort us with rest ; wherein we have strayed away from the right road, bring us back by the power of Christ, by the sweet compulsion and pathos of His Cross. We have no hope but in Christ ; in Christ we have all hope. We will hold fast by Him, and heed not what man may do against us. To Thy great heart we flee, for Thou didst build the Cross. Amen.

CXVII.

MEMORABLE SIGHTS IN LIFE.

I.

"I have seen the foolish taking root."—JOB v. 3.



LET us think of the curious sights of life. Let us recall, so far as we can, reminiscences of memorable sights, really unexpected and almost confounding things. We can write a Bible of our own : how we could store it with fact and poem, tragedy and sunny laughter and bitter tears. Will you think what riches you have at your disposal ? Do you know how much your balance is at the bank of memory ? Do not throw away your yesterdays. You talk about garrulous old men who are constantly talking about the far-gone past. Garrulous they may be in a certain poor sense, but they would be foolish if they relaxed their hold upon the

memorable past. Memory may be a friend to us when other friends are few, when we are very lonely, sitting in solitude, in the rainy day, having no outlook, the sun gone, and the time too soon for the stars. It is so sweet to call up one's yesterdays and interrogate them, and wonder where they are, and all the figures that make them vivid. Blessed be God for that kind of memory, that can go so far back as to get quite clear of to-day's murkiness and to-day's entanglement,—say some thirty years ago, or forty, yea, if we go into the harvest fields of a jubilee since, well, it is good reading.

Let us look at what some of these old men really saw, and then in a second discourse let us consider what God Himself has seen. Thus we shall get the view from two points, and thus we shall be able to take in very largely the whole orb of life, and its still vaster orbit.

How many passages are there in Scripture that begin with "I have seen"? Probably no man has counted the number. Let us keep, however, to that formula; it is interesting and useful to deal with a personal witness, to have a man so to say face to face and in your very grip. How many voices we shall hear if we listen well—the solemn voice, the monotone that has not heart enough to vary its expression, a gamut in one note, and then the light-some tone of youth and the cheeriness of the early days when all things were dripping with dew and all the dew shot through and through with morning light. These days are gone, but there is a joy in melancholy, there is a species of festival in misery. All that some people now have is their grief; that grief is their wealth, their song, their hope.

Take the wonderful instance in the text, "I have seen the foolish taking root." That is impossible! No, it is not impossible, it is a fact. It must have been a fact only in very ancient times? No, it is not only a fact in ancient times, it is this morning's fact, God's journal of this day. Such things are permitted. We cannot understand them, they baffle our faith, they confound our imagination. The whole scheme of a righteous universe seems to be turned upside

down by that one fact. A bad man can take root, a upas tree can strike its roots into the earth and from its bending branches can shed deadly poison; the thief and the gambler and the fraudulent may have more money than the man who prays every morning and says amen as if he would hand the case over to high heaven to answer in heaven's own way. Yes, the wicked take root, the foolish have a kind of standing-place; but some things come only for a moment. The mushroom has a root, and so has the oak. We must define even the word root, we must get at its history and its environment, and tear it open that we may read the secret of its fibre. Do not be content with glittering generalities when you judge Providence and propound some critical theory concerning the government of these trembling, awful, gladsome things which we gather up under the name of human life. I have heard of seed sown by a good sower, and it sprang up, but because there was no deepness of earth it soon withered away. We must therefore take in both the morning and the evening, for the evening and the morning are one day. Not what things are just now and to all appearance, but what abiding is there in them, what staying power, what is the resultant? These are questions that tear our fabrics to pieces and tear open the very core of every tree, and these inquiries are sharp and keen like a sword two-edged and cruel.

The psalmist saw also very much what Eliphaz saw; he says in one psalm, "I have seen"—what?—"the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree." You saw that? I saw it. You have no doubt whatever that it was a real fact? I have no doubt whatever as to the actuality of the circumstances. I have seen the wicked in great power, I have seen him taking up so much of the fresh air that there seemed to be no room for any other tree. In everything he seemed to have his own way; he asked, and received; he spake, and 'twas done; he had all manner of things at his immediate disposal. Did he never pray? Never, unless cursing be prayer. Did he never show any signs of real religion? Never; he wallowed in festivals of so-called delight, wanton, lustful, sordid, base—an incubus that the earth would

gladly have thrown out and forgotten. How long did the matter continue? In asking that question you have struck upon an important point. I am bound, therefore, to limit my testimony by saying, "I have seen the wicked in great power, spreading himself like a green bay tree; yet—" That is the word we have been waiting for, that is the turning in the lane. Now speak slowly and distinctly, and tell us how it all came to an end. "Yet he passed away, and was not; yea, I sought him, and he could not be found." Then the end of your sentence is not in the same key as the first part of it? No, no. If I look upon life at certain points, it is one thing; if I look after every degree of the circle has been touched, it is another thing. What then? Judge nothing before the time; do not take immediate appearances, but wait until the circuit has been completed. Take poor, drooping, weird, miserable yesterday, and say to some visitant from another world, This is one of the days, this is the kind of weather we have on the earth. Is it always so damp and dank and miserable and wholly intolerable? No; you must not judge the whole year by this day; to-morrow there may be sunshine, yea, this very night the moon may rise over the clouds and look the lovelier for that bank of darkness. Then I must wait, says the visitant, until I see more days. And my reply to the visitant is, Certainly you must wait 365 days and see the year all out; then if you please to make any remark upon our weather you may do so, but do see it all before you speak. So it is morally and spiritually. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree; yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but not a fibre of him could be found even in the dust. It is very wonderful how fortune even seems to change. That is not the man we knew five-and-twenty years ago, who was surrounded by all things comfortable, who was indeed characterised by an entourage of extreme richness and delight; he had everything that heart could wish. Yes, that is the man. What! that doubled-up, bent-backed old creature there who seems to have hardly a rag to wear? That is the same man. What has happened? God—has happened. There is no real abidingness in the stuff which is

wrongfully gotten or atheistically appropriated, though there may be nothing commercially dishonourable in the mere process of acquisition. It is not blessed bread, there is no nourishment in it. Get blessed bread, and the loaf has no crust; only a long beginning and no ending, because when God breaks the loaf His hands multiply what they break and distribute. Judge nothing therefore before the time. This man has not yet lived out his life; Eliphaz saw this foolish person whom he viewed with so much critical interest pass away, and the very house in which he lived was struck by a rod of lightning, and the foundations of it cannot be found.

Let us take the poet at another point. He says wearily—there is a yawn in his voice as he speaks; he excuses himself whilst he yawns—he says, “I have seen an end of all perfection.” Have you seen it? Yes, I have seen it. And he yawns again. He may be speaking pessimistically for the moment, but we encounter him at a moment of supreme disheartening. If I were called upon to paraphrase his words I think his monologue would run like this: I am quite out of heart with everything; I have begun, and I thought I was going to enjoy a really delightful vision of life; I have seen man after man come up and disappear; I have said, This is the man who is going to bless me, this same shall comfort my heart. And lo, he was struck down, and he died before noonday had struck its climacteric hour. I have seen an end of all their schemes, pretences, and offered delights; the wine-cup that was supposed to contain just what I wanted I drained to the dregs, and was thirsty with a fiery thirst. I have seen an end of all perfection: I have seen the babe torn from its mother’s breast, I have seen youth die, I have seen promise fade like a fading flower. Ah me! would God the end would come, and if it is an eternal dreamless sleep, sleep without a vision, let it come, I am tired, outworn; and write upon my poor simple slab, if you put one up, Here lies incarnate Disappointment. Some of us are tempted to talk after the fashion of that monologue; we would not perhaps allow our dearest friends to hear us, but there is much dialogue conducted when there is no one present but the man who con-

ducts it. Man always talks to himself. We have a mocking, gibing kind of remark to the effect that so and so, naming a dear friend, it may be, has a habit of talking to himself. We ought all to have that habit; that is oftentimes the richest, deepest, most tragic conversation. "As I was saying to myself the other day"—why, there is the very thing that I said you ought to practise. You now tell me that you talked to yourself the other day. I may tell you that you talk to yourself every day, and the more you talk to yourself the better it may be for you. Sometimes a poor monologue breaks into praise and a kind of dumb hallelujah, and the man says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name." Were there two speakers? Only one, and that kind of one which is dual. "Bless the Lord, O my soul"—then who speaks? The soul speaks to the soul: it is a great mystery, and they who deny the Trinity, that marvellous Three-One, should take heed lest they speak untruly and indeed speak unwisely and unprofitably with their lips.

Do not let us yield to the spirit of disappointment. What did you expect? Disappointment is the measure of expectation. You must correct yourself at the point of expectancy. Any man may be the victim of disappointment who sets before himself an impossible ideal; any man will fail of his ambition who undertakes to scale the mountains of the moon while yet he tarries upon the earth. There are some things that cannot be done. Of course, if you choose to make a fool of yourself by sketching out a household programme which you have not funds enough to realise, you will be disappointed, and you ought to be. If you would moderate your expectations, and cut your coat according to your cloth, you might be a really comfortable and contented man. Why torment ourselves with expectations that are simply impossible and absurd, and which if fulfilled would only be disappointments under another name? I have learned—said the greatest and strongest of our teachers—I have learned (a word that indicates a process) I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content; saying, This is how we live to-day, this is our day's meal, this is all we can

have these four and twenty hours. It is really not so bad, it is very good, it is perhaps more than some of us deserve: come, boys, hearts up, and make the best of the conditions. People who in the spirit of grace take life so will fall asleep night by night in the midst of a grateful song.

And what have you seen? Tell us. Job iv. 8—"I have seen"—well, what have you seen? I like your appearance, and I am charmed by your voice; I wonder now what you have seen; speak slowly and distinctly, as I told the other man—"I have seen they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same." Do you say so deliberately? I do. You could swear it? On the holy Book I could certainly do so. Say it again, and speak if possible more distinctly. "I have seen they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same." You have not heard that? Yes, I have heard it. Is that all? Is it mere hearsay evidence? No, I tell you I have seen it. You pledge your character? I do. We are glad to have testimony so direct and explicit. This is a great law. There must be something behind the plougher and the sower. Yes, there is something behind the ploughman and the seed-sower. What is that something? It is less a something than a personality. It is God who is conducting the whole thing, do what you like. But is it not man who builds the walls? It is not, it is God; how could a man build the walls if God had not first built the quarries? You are stopping at secondary points, you are not studying the whole case. All the great cathedral has been shaped into a monument of the genius of one man. And yet I see in it a monument to the genius of one God. God is the stonecutter, the glazier, the painter, the artist in every form and development; and if you deny that, I will ask you where the stones came from, and I will further press you with the question, What is the name that is written all over the rocks? You can spell it in little shells, paint it in green but venerable moss, and see it in the stone itself. Tell me what is his name, if thou hast heard it; do not be ashamed to name it; it may send a ventilating blast through all foetid places and all evil aggregations; name the name. It is God. Who built those ships upon the wide sea?

How massive, how noble, how majestic, how graceful! These were all built on the Clyde or on the Tyne or on the Thames or on any other river you may choose to name. What very able people they must be who dwell on the banks of these rivers! Yes, they are very capable men. They know how to handle. To handle what? Yes, that is the point—to handle. But I want to know what they handle, and where they got it. Who built the ship called Lebanon, Bashan, the forest out of which all navies are cut? Do not stop me at a semicolon in this literature; do not stop me at all until I come to a period.

So it must be. And yet how delightful it is to turn aside for one moment and say that the contrary of this law is also true. The witness says, "I have seen they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same." Now is there not some other witness who will arise and say what he has seen? Certainly, thousands of witnesses in every generation, yea, and tens of thousands, who will say that good seed in good ground means good harvesting. God's corn grows no poison. If the wicked man reaps his black harvest, the good man reaps his honest and nourishing wheat. This is not a law that goes on one side; the whole case of life is contemplated by the inspired writers, and the wide outlook and complete grasp at once explains and vindicates their inspiration. You cannot do a good deed but you will find it again. The poet found his song in the heart of a friend, he found his arrow in the oak, and he found his good deeds where he least expected to find them. What a blessed thing, as old age grows on and grows upon us, to find man after man saying, I remember what distress I was in, and how you helped me at a very critical point of life; how thankful I am for that remark you made under such and such circumstances; it was a remark that shaped itself like a key, and by turning it I got hold of the lock, and it sprang back; I opened the door and went on to honour and sufficiency of means, and I have you to thank for helping me at that point. And again: I welcome you with real gratitude, for when I was a boy you found me once in my father's house struggling with a passage in Virgil, and you sat down

beside me and told me all you knew about it; and I thank you, for that was a happy day in my life. And another, and another, and yet another, each coming up with his little flower of praise and thanks. I have seen they that sow righteousness and charity and nobleness reap the same. Be not deceived, God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, good or bad, he shall reap the same. That is discouraging on the one side, and encouraging on the other. Seed does not die, it grows, and it cries as it were to be reaped; and the good man, who has sown in tears and in self-distrust and with some measure of gloomy disappointment, was bidden to go forth with his sickle; and lo, he returned in the gloaming with sheaves, and with sheaves of song in his heart.

Here then we have been dealing with the Bible of events, facts, instances that occur under our own very observation. I want every one of us to have a kind of private Bible, and often to compare the Bible of Revelation with the Bible of observation; then we shall often be heard saying, I have seen that, this reads to me like part of my own biography; I have seen that man, I have seen those circumstances, I have seen those issues, and thus the Bible is confirmed by the record of daily events. Then I would like each of us to have a Bible of experience. Do not throw away the good things of the Lord; do not throw away answers to prayer. I have had answers to prayer as direct as if I were speaking to any one of you who had replied to me in the hearing of my bodily ear. I cannot be an infidel. If I tried to be an unbeliever I should be the deadliest witness against myself. I have seen—I have seen—I have seen: the Biblical formula I can adopt and utter with added emphasis, and sign the testimony with the blood of my right hand. Have a city of the mind; do not live in external things; you will be gloomy and unhappy if you are living upon only what you can see out of the window, and you will often say, There is nothing in the papers to-day. There is always something in the papers if they are rightly read. We want the reading eye, the penetrating vision, the sensitive contact with things concrete and actual, and yet not so concrete but that they can hold

within their very hearts somewhat of the mystic music and mystic vision which we find in the Bible. Thus I cannot part with the Bible. I have no temptation to part with it at all, because I have written the most of it in my own heart according to my own degree and measure of environment; and I am here after long, long years to say, One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever; and one prophecy passeth away and another vision disappears, but the word of the Lord abideth for ever. And I find that word in man, in revelation, in experience. I have seen God face to face by the power of faith. Lord increase our faith!

As if I had not already enough to do, I have undertaken for a very brief period, namely, six days, to edit an evening newspaper. I think I have enough to do, but I feel one day that I have too much to do, and another day I want to do seven times as much as I have ever done. Man is an inconsistent creature, whatever paper he reads. It will be too long a time between now and the first number for you to remember anything I may say, and therefore I shall defer it until next Thursday. I do not think that such an opportunity for attempting to do good has ever been offered to any minister of the Gospel. It is in that sense that I look at the whole matter. We can bear a testimony at least, come of it what may; we must bear the testimony simply, honestly, and resolutely. I feel that if we do these things in the sight of God our labour will not be lost.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, all from heaven and all from the Divine heart, be in us, and with us, and tarry until the gates are opened, and we enter the heavens. Amen.

[*Sunday Morning, December 9th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALmighty GOD, we thank Thee for all voices that call us toward the morning. Thou dost give the morning star to him that overcometh: who can tell the brightness of that star, the lustre of that jewel? We beseech Thee to awake us out of our sleep; we have slumbered too long, we ought to have been out much sooner; the fields are white unto the harvest, the whole call of the gleaming light of the sky is towards service, endurance, and mastery. We have not seen our life yet; we see but dim images, visions that come and go, promising a great glory, and remaining long enough to assure us that the promise may be true. We thank Thee for all uplifting influences, for all things that compel us upward and onward towards those who are clothed in white. It is so deep is the valley, so dark, so cold; but for these calls to wakefulness and summer our souls would die of despair. Thou dost send Thy prophets and Thine apostles to tell us that the morning cometh and the abiding day is at hand. We bless Thee for all that we have seen even of Thine hinderparts, Thou God whose face is glory. We have not seen that glory, but we have seen Thy goodness, Thy mercy, we have felt upon our wan faces the dripping of Thy warm tears. We bless Thee for deliverances many and great; we can almost thank Thee for the unsolved problems of life, because so great has been Thy goodness in the past that Thou dost intend to amaze us by some gracious answer of explanatory love. We have been down in the valley of the week, amid the cold rain, in the noise and in the tumult, the unholy strife and the wanton licence, wherein our virtue has been overthrown and our promises have been crushed within our heart. But we are welcome in Thine house through Jesus Christ our Lord, the Star out of Jacob, the sceptre and the shining out of Israel. Behold, these are our promises; they are Israel who love the Christ and who follow in obedience the call of the Cross. We come therefore now and again to claim Thy promises, asking Thee to open the seal and to show us what has been foreclosed these countless centuries. We believe great things are coming, the kingdom of God is at hand; there is to be a great shining through these grey clouds, and all the sky that we have looked up to with wonder and expectancy is to be a great diadem made for the King. Thou hast been good to

us through Jesus Christ our Lord; we have seen His Cross in the cloud, we have seen the same Cross in the summer flower and beauty, we have seen that identical Cross amidst our joys and our delights. It is a great Cross full of Thy love, full of Thy mercy, moist with Thy tears—the dew of hope, the dew of the world's final and endless morning. If Thou hast called us to service in Thy kingdom, we humbly pray Thee, in the name of Christ, to strengthen us for its full and efficient discharge. Thou hast laid us aside in sickness and growing frailty, so that the years are burdened: let it so be, let the Lord help us to say amen at the funeral of our own hopes. We commend one another tenderly to Thy care; we all need the embrace of Thy love. The struggles are severe, the hills are steep, the enemy is very strong and sleepless. The Lord have us in His holy keeping, and then when the storm is over we shall feel and know of a certainty that the roof is unharmed. Amen.

CXVIII.

THIS LIFE ONLY.

“... *this life only*.”—I COR. xv. 19.

“ F in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” In the Revised Version: “If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable.” In the margin of the Revised Version: “If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable.” The Versions and the margin say the same thing in other words. The truth admits of being variously stated; there is no one unchanging formula. The truth comes in its own way, incarnates itself in its own flesh and shape, but it is always the same, as the Gospel is, whether preached on the high hill or in the deep dale, in thunder or in whispered love.

“This life only.” But that is an impossibility; there is no “life only.” We have made the little seas of language, the small pools, and islanded off the great continents of duration, continuity, and divinity. Always distinguish between what God did and what we have done. They may be very different; we may

have committed trespass in divine dominions, we may have set up little idols and altars of our own, and have gone awwhoring after them. Who made the orthodoxy that is so much talked about, or the heterodoxy that is so much dreaded? These are not scriptural words. It is to be lamented that they were ever forced upon our attention.

“If in this life only.” What is meant by that expression? Sometimes what is meant is mistakenly called environment. That is not a scriptural expression; that word has done a good deal of mischief in the Church. It sounds well, but there is nothing in it. If it were fuller of meaning it would be less resonant. What is “environment”? what is surrounding, encompassing? Is it the little environment or the great environment, the environment that we can touch, handle, and almost play with; or the mystic, immeasurable environment that makes mere cyphers of constellations and planetary wildernesses? Who has any right to draw a line and say, Within this line is your environment? By what authority? No man has any such authority. No man can measure the environment of any other man. Environment is not an inventory. Until we really grasp that idea we shall be the victims of phrases. There is an environment sordid, and also an environment intellectual, and beyond that an environment spiritual—the whole idea and genius of ghostliness. Who is the stipendiary limitation-drawer, who says, This is your environment, and the larger line is another man’s environment? We must have definition before we can make any progress in this kind of argument. We insist therefore again and again upon the inquiry, What is environment? is it bodily or mental? The body is here and visible, but the mind is yonder and invisible; the body has left the so-called environment, it is away enjoying the holiday of the holy places, the festivities of opening heaven. What is the environment? What are you talking about? Environment is very much what we make it. We may learn something from the children of misery. Sometimes the desolated home is fragrant with the odours of the sanctuary. Now and then hunger may be in the house, and yet plenteousness of another kind of food.

Man shall not live by bread alone. Until we get some grip of these inner and larger things, all life is a cloud and a confusion.

Take the expression "this life only." There is no such thing; we cannot start an argument upon that basis. Sometimes we make large drafts upon the credulity of men, and say, Suppose for argument's sake— We cannot get even so far on this line. It is inconceivable and unthinkable. How far is it possible to dislodge the sophism that there is a lonely world, a cut-off life? "This life only." Life cannot be so bisected; no man has an instrument keen enough to cut life up into little pieces, allocate some of the pieces in this place and others in that place. It is not possible, it is not in the charter by which we hold our life. Unity is the sign of the universe. Sometimes for convenience sake we say, as the apostle said, "this life only"—here and now, in this place or in that place. In making such remarks we are taking great liberties with thought and with speech, we are showing our littleness and betraying our Master who has given us a kingdom to expound and to illustrate. When we break anything off from any other thing, the house is one. If we could grasp that idea in any approachably adequate degree there would follow mastery, a sense of rest, security, and ever-springing life and gratitude.

The apostle says, "hope in Christ"—an expression which renders the suggestion of there being a "this life only" absolutely more and more, if the expression may be allowed, impossible. Christ never came with one world; He belongs to all the world. The whole Christ-idea multiplies the worlds; the Christ-idea even multiplies the life that is here and now around us. The Christ-idea makes the wilderness a banqueting palace, turns the stones into children of Abraham, makes the stars significant of many mansions in my Father's house. There you have the plural and the singular; the mansions are many, the house is one. There are many stars at night visible to the naked eye: there is only one sky.

All great questions depend very much upon the background; that is to say, there is no background.

Excluding for the moment the idea of the personality of God, what is the background of everything? Space and time, and there is no other background. These are ideas that very few people think about. Space—come, tell me what is space. No man knows. The greatest men have endeavoured to define it, and have left the definition incomplete. Is it possible that no man knows what space is? It is not only possible, it is a fact. No man can exhaustively define it. We get at it in what we call little corners and small lines, but these corners and lines are intrusions of ours; they do but show our littleness, they do but help the small countings of the market-place, they cannot handle or define the riches of God. If you were to think about space you would go mad. There is a species of affection called religious melancholia, but melancholia would be universal if men were to attempt with real strenuousness of purpose to grasp the idea of space. Why fasten all these lugubrious affections and distresses upon religion? — as who should say, If there was no religion there would be no melancholy. What a fallacy, what a lie! There is melancholy in everything, madness in the history of an atom. We need not go to church to hear about mysteries; they are in our own shadow, they are in the uplifting of the hand. Time—there is no time; that is an invention of man, who never invents anything that is durable and that is not destined to be superseded by some other and better thing. We have to break up space even to begin to understand the very least conception of the meaning of magnitude or special opportunity and possibility. So we break up space—without breaking up both space and time we can get no advantage from either of them. The spending is not in the golden sovereign, but in the sovereign changed into silver and bronze. The golden sovereign stands for something greater than we have yet fully imagined or conceived. There are units that can only be broken up imaginatively. There is an arithmetic going on, ages upon ages, after the literal arithmetic is forgotten. You cannot give away anything you have in your hand by equally dividing it; it would take you the unbeginning and the unending eternity to give away one plucked apple by equally dividing it. We thought that the division

would cease with the apple itself; we must get that fallacy out of our heads; the apple equally divided and equally distributed by the right hand and by the left never ceases, never can cease. Yet for the sake of convenience and immediate marketing we have broken up things into little pieces and momentary quantities and qualities, and the mischief is that we never or seldom look beyond those little pieces and fractions. We are worshippers of fractions; we do not bow down before the solemn and immutable integer. That is one of the reasons why religion is supposed to be losing its influence and to be losing its hold upon the male portion of the community. I thought they would go first; even lunacy has a kind of philosophy. We think the woman went first in the old, old record, but the man has outrun her very wonderfully ever since. It is stated almost as a fact in statistics that the church is not now attended by men. I will not stop to express my contempt of that mean suggestion. The mistake is that we imagine we can get rid of religion. We are pursued by metaphysics. The mental philosopher opens his gates and charges us fees for the purpose of telling us what mental philosophy is. He who believes truly and thoroughly in mental philosophy is on the road to prayer, to spiritual conceptions, to the kingdom of God. Do not call him infidel; he is on a journey; we must wait before estimating him until the journey's end, and then even of him it may be said, it will be said, it must be said, Behold, he prayeth.

We have said that there is no such thing as time except under the very narrowest definition, and that definition we have ourselves imposed upon language. We are clever, no doubt, at breaking up time into small morsels; so we have the hour, the minute, the second; we also have the day, the week, the month; in our biggest moods of contemplation we have the century, and spread a tablecloth in honour of the century. What is a century? Nothing—a dewdrop on the main of duration. If we were to think about time adequately we should, as in the first instance, namely, the instance of space, go mad. No man can fix his mind upon the idea and the evolution of time

and yet remain sane. Think for a moment what it begins in a shadowy beginning even to mean. For ever and ever and ever; never beginning, never ending, no hint of ending. Duration has no limits; God lives in one eternal Now. Do not think about this, or you will certainly go mad. We thought about space until we exhausted the report of the telescope about one gallery of the constellations, and another, and another, and a thousand, and ten thousand, and twice ten thousand, and twice twenty thousand galleries of these shining, speechless worlds; until we said, Do not proceed, let us gather stones by the sea beach, let us limit ourselves; do not, do not threaten the brain with utterest madness. Beyond the forty thousand may be four hundred thousand more. So with time: and age, a millennium, a thousand millenniums, multiplied by ten thousand, and ten thousand times ten thousand millenniums—where will it end? Never! Yet we thought that all the mysteries were in the Church, in the Bible, and we have ventured in our grim humorousness, which has everything in it but piety and healthy laughter, to say that the minister was the man who dealt in mysteries! We take a limited space, and sell it; it is impossible to sell infinity, so we begin to sell it in little pieces. We sell the freehold of a little piece of space; we sell it for limited purposes; we tell ourselves that land in this quarter will increase in value. In what quarter? There is no quarter in infinity. God is unthinkable, and infinity is unthinkable, and you cannot give away the one on the ground of unthinkableness without giving away both. We have turned space into a house, a house with a garden, a house, and then two houses, and then a terrace of houses, and then after long consideration a town of houses. What poor tinkering work is this, if regard be had to space in its proper definition. Yet all these arrangements both of time and space are concessions to our weakness. They may be so many condescensions of the Divine mercy to the weakness of our present intellectual condition.

Let us now remember that we have to do with the idea of God exactly what we do with the idea of time and with the idea of space, we have to break it up into little pieces. Hence the religious education of the

world is infinitely diverse. One man is in the first book, and another is nearing the last. How can they agree? How can they be one in the literal and formal expression of their beliefs? One student is just beginning in the valley, and another student, hoary and back-bent, is just within the last few paces of the mountain height. What communion have they one with another? None literally, but great communion spiritually and sympathetically, the old pilgrim shouting down the flying wind, Hearts up, young climber! it is fresher up here; never give up; to-morrow will see thee further on; I welcome thee. And the young beginner away down in the valley, seeing the ascending figure, thanks God and says, What is possible to one man may be possible also to another; I will cling on, and toil on, until there be no ascent to conquer. Even so with the definition of God. That definition varies with our age, with our opportunities, with our intellectual capacity; and yet centrally and essentially it may be one and the same. Sometimes we have to get at the idea of God through man. Look at some really great spiritual Aristotle in whom the register of the human mind seemed, according to some eminent judges, to have been complete; I look up to him with wonder, and such a man with such a mind and such an influence seems to make God possible. Why, that is what the Bible says. The Bible says that God made man in His own image and likeness, in the image of God made He him. What wonder then if by a kind of anthropology we get hold of God by getting hold, in a right conception, of man, even of a very lowly man, even by understanding somewhat of the mystery of the babe? When you are really one with the babe you are nearly one with God. God Himself said so; He has kept many things from the adult population, He has ordained praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. Jesus took babes on His knee, took them up in His arms, and folded them by right of creatorship, and He said, "Of such is the kingdom of God."

Then we get nearly to God when God becomes Man. We think of the great process called the Incarnation; that is, the incoming into flesh—a robe to be worn for a time, and like an outworn vesture

to be thrown off into the wardrobe of the grave. Then we give God a name. That was the supreme insolence, that was nearly the matchless blasphemy—to name God! God is the nameless. “Inquire not My name.” But having invented names for God, the mischief is that orthodoxies have gone with such naming, and he is orthodox who believes in this naming, and he is heterodox who does not believe in this naming. Naming is a process that ought never to have been introduced; it was introduced by irreverence, by ambition, and by blasphemy, in the degree in which it was introduced for making ecclesiastical discriminations. We have to deal with a nameless Name. If we have been permitted, even by God’s own usage, to employ the word God, it has only been to enable us to get hold of some kind of standing ground. God is the unknown, the unnamed, the ungrasped, who treats the idols contemptuously, and burns their little hut-houses while His anger is kindled but a little.

Surely we are all religious men. We are not all theologians, but we are all reverend and reverent, we are all filled with a sense of awe and wonder and hope. And it is at this point that the Gospel comes in with all its sweet messages, with all its advances, offers, and hospitalities. The Gospel treats us according to our condition of mind and spiritual estate, and offers us all that we can now apprehend or comprehend. Nor does it end there; it says, What you know not now ye shall know hereafter. The Gospel says, I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Let us therefore rest where we can, and hope to take up the journey after we have slumbered through the night. The journey never ends, but it grows in uplands, in gardenland, in fair vineyards, in sense of love to God, and in a growing desire, which will grow with the growing ages, to be more godlike. This we have learned in the school of Jesus. Without the school of Jesus we should have had no such learning, and the great lesson of the school of Jesus is—The Cross, with all its blood and tragedy and love.

The foregoing is part of a series of discourses, irregular in their deliverance, united in their purpose.

[*Thursday Morning, December 13th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we bless Thee that Thou hast made Thy dwellingplace in the humble and contrite heart. Thou dwellest not in temples made with hands; neither at Jerusalem nor in this or that mountain art Thou to be worshipped: God is a Spirit. Thou seekest those who are humble in heart to pray unto Thee, and Thou dost answer them even in the act of supplication. We bless Thee that Thou dost see all our way; Thou God seest me, is the cry of all who dwell in Thy sanctuary. May it also be the testimony of those who would work wickedness in secret places; may they know that Thy burning judgment follows them in all concealments, and may they feel that not until they please the Lord can they really be in possession of truest, deepest joy. The eyes of the Lord wander to and fro throughout the whole earth; all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. There is nothing done in secret that shall not be proclaimed on the housetops. The Lord help us to live in the publicity of His own eye. We fear no other public; we fear the Lord, and tremble before Him, and ask Him that our hearts may be hearts of righteousness, simplicity, and truth. The Lord give rest to the weary, comfort to those who are sad of heart, and direction to men who walk in the right path, but have but little strength. We pray our prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus. He taught us to pray; He encouraged us to pray; in His Cross we find the altar of prayer; there we bow ourselves down, crying in humility and brokenness of heart, each for himself, God be merciful unto me a sinner! Amen.

CXIX.

MEMORABLE SIGHTS IN LIFE.

II.



LET us continue the discourse which we began last Thursday. The text last Thursday was "I have seen." The subject was Strange Sightings, peculiar revelations of character and instances of providence. The apostle in the first instance said to us, "I have seen"; all the Old Testament saints said before him, "I have seen"—"I have seen the foolish taking root," "I have seen the wicked in great power." Then the disheartened man said, "I have seen an end of all perfection." And the reverential man said, "I have seen God face to face." Job, mingling his voice with the other testimonies, said, "I have seen they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same." There are many other instances of "I have seen," and again "I have seen." But all this was from the human side, what man had seen. We promised last Thursday to inquire what God has seen.

The Lord Himself uses the same formula, "I have seen." The picture therefore would not be complete if we did not take in both sides. So, let us reverently gather around the holy record, and ask God to tell us what He has seen. He says in Exodus iii. 7, "I have seen the affliction of My people." Then He has been watching, then He has been listening; He is interested in human affairs; things do not happen by chance and without Divine cognisance and direction and control. The very tears you shed are in God's bottle, the very hairs of your head are all numbered; a good man's steps are ordered by the Lord. So everything is under Divine supervision. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth; all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. How tenderly breaks in this strain of

sympathetic solicitude and regard: "I have seen the affliction of My people." That is the true Deity. The God that takes an interest in our troubles, sorrows, and miseries, is the God to worship, be His name what it may, reside where He may; we must find Him. Oh that I knew where I might find Him! I would come before Him with my sighing, and afterward with my grateful singing. The apostle says, "Casting all your care upon Him; for—" I want an angel to complete the sentence; human voices are too rough for such music. What comes after the word "for"? Let us supply a word or two and test by our own sense of music whether the word is right. "For He is omnipotent." Too long a word; it adds to our burden rather than relieves it. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He is majestic, heaven-filling." No, that would not do; that is rhetoric, not gospel. Now let the apostle give us the word, and let us answer with our hearts whether it is the right word. We know it, every heart knows the answer to the riddle after it has heard it; he knows whether it is the right answer, or whether it is some vain windy guess. "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." That is right, the heart knows it, the wounded spirit hails the answer as true, reviving, divine melody. We therefore worship a sympathetic God. Now that we know that He cares for us we may tell Him everything; keep nothing back, empty the heart, and let Him see the trouble drooping before His very feet; "for He careth for you." And when you speak to sympathy you cannot speak too long; when you speak to love you cannot speak too much. I cannot worship omnipotence only, sheer power, naked strength; I can worship love, condescension, pity, and I feel a rising buoyancy of courage even in my affliction when I hear this Gospel—"I have seen, I have seen; I have seen the affliction; I know every weal that is on the skin brought out by the scourge of the oppressor, I know every tear dropped in secret, I know all the wordless sighing; I keep the time, I preside over the furnace. Man, I know it all, every whit; cast all thy care upon Me, for I care for thee"—a speech in single syllables, every syllable beautiful as dew, every dew-drop more precious than a jewel.

And in the same chapter we have the same thing in other words: "I have seen the oppression." When God sees He judges. With God, to see is not merely to observe; He does not look upon a spectacle only, He penetrates the very heart of the mystery. It is to Him a moral case, a spiritual agony, an immediate problem of suffering and hopelessness. Sometimes it does one good to suffer in the presence of one we love. We almost wish that the suffering might be greater, that the loving observer might see somewhat, not only of our endurance, of our heroism, but of our love, and we could send messages from the very centre of our sorrow to this effect: I do this the more willingly because you are looking on; we will talk of this some other day; I accept the oppression if in any degree it will deepen your love for me, and elicit from your lips one word of tender regard; if you leave me, if I look up to the place which you now occupy and find it vacant, my suffering will be without relief, and I may turn upon the oppressor and rend him; your stopping just where you are and looking just like that helps me to be a man; remain, and save me. How our burdens would melt away if we would realise that God knows every one of them, knows to a penny-weight all that we carry, and if so be we can carry it in His strength, we shall not know that we are carrying it. A burden is nothing where there is strength to trifle with it; it is when the striving power or the staying power gives way that the burden becomes a weight and finally crushes us. Hope can carry any weight; it is non-belief that staggers and dies.

Then if we still keep to Exodus, in chapter xxxii. 9 we shall hear another tone. We cannot resist the charge. A charge is only of consequence when we know that it is true; when we know the charge is a lie we put it amongst our anecdotes and smile at it when we have nothing else to do. Applause is nothing if the heart says, You do not deserve that cheer. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, if our hearts in the sight and fear of God can sustain us, then all is easy and more than easy; it is full of stimulus and comfort. Here is the charge against this people, and they would know how far it is true: "I have seen

this people, and, behold"—He speaks slowly because of conscious grief; God is grieved sometimes—"and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people." A stiffneck cannot bow down in prayer. Stiffneckedness means obstinacy, obduracy, self-idolatry, and self-confidence that amounts to presumptuousness and blasphemy. There are people who are inaccessible to the sweetest influences that can appeal to the human life and plead with it. There are those who are inaccessible to new ideas. Probably that is the most hopeless condition in which a man can find himself. Having weights and scales, he thinks he can weigh anything. He forgets that he can but weigh in ounces and in pounds, and even when it comes to tons, tons are nothing—mere weightless specks of dust. It is not in man to make right weights and scales. A man, stiffnecked in his pride and self-regard, is a hopeless creature. He will call himself firm, and thus tell another lie to his own soul. With what lies we have stuffed our souls; we have done it, not another man, not a tempter outside of us; we have told lies by unreckonable sums and numbers to our own credulous souls. Distinguish between firmness and obduracy or obstinacy, mulish determination to be right in your own esteem. True firmness is ready to take any further considerations. Infallibility is not true firmness on the part of a fallible nature. There are other things than this we have seen; there are considerations we have not taken within our purview; we have judged unrighteous judgment sometimes without knowing it and without intending it, simply because we have made up our minds to a given course, and have written our names among the stiffnecked. You can do nothing with a stiffnecked man; you can do nearly everything with a man who keeps an open mind and a sweet tender heart, that prays God every morning that the winds of heaven may come and breathe upon it as if it were a living harp. So Israel was stiffnecked, turned its back upon God, walked in the ways of harlotry and whoredom before the pure whiteness of heaven; and the Lord was ashamed of Israel, and let Israel go on to its inevitable serfdom and other and painful punishment. So He will do with us. We get nothing out of this stiffneckedness; it does not become poor mortal little

man, who was born yesterday and will die to-morrow, to be stiffnecked, presumptuous, and to invest himself with a worse than papal infallibility. Do let us be open-minded and open-hearted. That is the way to be always young; in that course we shall find summer so warm, so rich, as at least to postpone the snow and frost of winter.

Now if we advance into 2 Kings ix. 26 we shall find, "I have seen the blood of Naboth . . . saith the Lord." We have an eye for blood. We breed and train our bloodhounds, and great wonders they are in a small way, but the Lord hath a nostril for blood, an eye for that murderous redness, for that revolting stain. Saith the Lord, according to the most ancient history we have, "The blood of thy brother Abel crieth unto Me from the ground." The soaked earth can pray, the dishonoured dust can approach the court of heaven, and plead with speechless agony. "I have seen the blood of Naboth." You may shed blood in secret, but it cannot remain secret long. Worse than the shedding of literal blood is the shedding of bloodless blood. I can imagine a wound that leaves no red scar behind it, a stiletto so fine, so keen, that it pierces the heart without almost touching the skin. There are many ways of shedding blood; many are the ways in which we can murder one another. There are murderous tongues as well as murderous hands. The murderer's hand may be a kind of instrument of momentary passion; the other kind of murder is the reddest, the fieriest, the deadliest. Let every man examine himself. Have I murdered any man's reputation? Have I slain any trustful loving heart? Let me look back along the half-century path I have trodden; how many dead hearts are lying in the hedges and ditches of the way? Did I murder any heart's hope? Did I tread upon some little heart-flower and crush it out of existence, and wipe my mouth at family prayer? O secret murderer, thou shalt be discovered, arrested, tried, driven away. God sees all the oppression, all the blood, all the wrongdoing, all the injustice. I think I will—I think I will now at this moment take that money back, and go to those who survive the hearts I have broken and fall right down dead before them and say, Guilty!

pity me, pardon me ; for I can never pardon myself. I will go to-day. Does God hold His wrath for ever ? Have we not read our lesson in Isaiah lvii. 16, "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth : for the spirit should fail before Me, and the souls which I have made." What monologues are held in heaven ; how much God talks to Himself ! We cannot overhear Him, but we can peruse the reports of the divine monologues as they are written in the wondrous records of Holy Scripture. It is marvellous to notice what monologues there are. It would be profitable to collect a cluster or group of such monologues. Take this as one example. Now wherein does the word "I have seen" occur, for we must not for a moment leave that formula ? It occurs in Isaiah lvii. 18, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him." There is the voice I like. The other voice is quite right ; life would be impoverished if we took out of it all judicial and punitive elements. We must feel very deeply now and again, and indeed frequently, that we are dealing with a righteous God, if He is only an idea. If God is but an algebraic symbol He must in His name stand for righteousness, truth, justice. That will give us confidence in His tenderness. True religion is not sentiment, but religion without sentiment is not religion at all. It is a poor flower that the dew will not weep upon. So we have God coming back in tenderness : "I have seen his ways, and will heal him : I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners." How swift the alternation !—"I will judge, I will heal." He counteth the stars, He healeth the broken heart ; He has hardly time to assert His majesty until He reveals His love. God looks upon all our ways, our little mean ways and our greater ways. He hears words He does not want to hear ; He with—may the expression be permitted—with acuter hearing He listens to the cry of penitence and self-helplessness. What a wonderful thing it would be if we could write the record of the prayers we have prayed in secret !—sometimes over the very ledger in the middle of the City when no one was near, and the very solitude became a kind of Eden. How we have prayed when we have been going home from the City that we might forget, or restore, or in some way express penitence and self-

abhorrence, and we would surely, God helping us, do it very early the next morning, and be down at the office before the caretaker had undone the lock. And sometimes we have prayed in the very middle of our sin. Strange is human nature, a wondrous instrument is the constitution of man. Sometimes in our prayer in public we have been covenanting with the devil.

“I have seen his ways.” Then God knows all that has gone before, blessed be His name. O that I might throw the arms of my love around Him, and kiss the heart that remembers what I have gone through, suffered falsely, it may be unjustly; He knows what my heredity has done for me; perhaps that heredity turned my throat into a furnace so hot that all the intoxicating drinks ever manufactured could not quench. Mayhap my blood is leprous with an ancient depravity for which I am not responsible. Perhaps some grey-haired unknown ancestor inflicted this bleeding wound upon me, which I cannot staunch and which bleeds inwardly, so that the blood drips, drips, while I am singing my psalm or shaping my lips in prayer. God says, My son, my child, I know it all. He knows my frame, He remembers that I am dust, and His mercy endureth for ever. I would do good, but evil is present with me; I have high impulses, but there is another law in my members that says, If you try to come near to execution, I will smite you! It is an awful tragedy. Do not let any man take licence to do evil on the ground of a philosophical construction of the doctrine of heredity; on the other hand, do let us pity some poor souls that have inherited something equal to seven devils.

In Jeremiah xxiii. 13 the Lord says, “I have seen folly in the prophets.” I break off the word there, I need not add “of Samaria,” because the Lord sees folly in all prophets. And yet I would not have a prophet preach to me that had no sense of sin. He would not be a preacher to me, he might be a preacher to the inhabitants of some other planet, but I want a preacher who knows human life, who knows when to raise his voice and when to lower it; I want a man to preach to me who can say, I have been just where

you are ; it is a sad, sad place, but take heart, there is a way out of it, God Himself has made a way ; it is a way divine, it is the way of the Cross and of the whole Gospel in all its mystery of priesthood and atonement and prayer : do not die just here ; man, I have sat exactly where you are sitting now, and I tell you it is possible to get out of that most awful place ; here is a hand, and it is only a hand because God's hand is in it, and if I can just raise you ever so little, grip well, take hold as if you never meant to let go again, and, God helping us both, I will take you home to-night, and you will find the house-gate ajar, and who knows but that they may be sitting up for you in the old house : come !

Thus we live under the supervision of God. "I have seen the affliction of My people ;" "I have seen the oppression ;" "I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiffnecked people ;" "I have seen the blood of Naboth ;" "I have seen his ways, and will heal him ;" "I have seen folly in the prophets ;" and then finally in Hosea vi. 10, "I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel." Yet He did not cut Israel down like a tree that encumbered the ground. He melted over Israel : How can I give thee up, how can I leave thee ? If I go into My heaven without taking thee with Me, would not heaven be impoverished ? O sweet Gospel ! It is true ! It ought to be true. It is the grandest music ever heard. It is the sublimest offer ever made.

I commence a very important public work on Monday next, in which I seek your encouragement, your prayer, and your sympathy. The problem is whether London can endure or can support a daily newspaper governed from beginning to end by Christian principles. That is the simple problem, and I ask God to help me to do something, in co-operation with my friends, towards a successful solution of it. Do not believe anything whatever about my plans, and methods, and purposes, but wait to see what they are under my own sign-manual. There are people who find delight in circulating false reports, or creating false impressions. Have nothing to do with these people. I have

nothing to do with them. When you have seen the work you will be able to form your own judgment and estimate of it. I shall do nothing to help forward the cause of betting, gambling, and drinking, and all manner of social evil. I am against it with my whole mind. For myself I have nothing whatever to do with these things, and I attribute my abstinence not to my own strength, but to the grace of my sustaining Father in heaven. I know that I am entering upon a very critical and difficult task. But such are the terms upon which the offer has been made to me—terms involving absolute control over everything in the paper, all the advertisements and all the literary matter—that I dare not shrink from the responsibility. My friends, I have always had to thank you for your sympathy in bitter sorrow, and for your sympathy in bright and thrilling joys. We cannot be long together now by reason of the effluxion of time. Time wastes the greatest strength. Time brings all things to a close. Oh ! that we may close our lives as we close this service by singing “Praise God from whom all blessings flow.”

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, and peace, the triune blessing of the Triune God, be our defence, our delight, our heaven. Amen.

SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 16TH, 1900.

Micah v. 2.

2. But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah [*the old name and the new ; the far-away and the near-at-hand ; comfort thee*], though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel ; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting [*a little acorn, but holding all the forests of Bashan*].

John i. 1-5.

1. [*“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”*] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [*God was with Himself.*]

2. The same was in the beginning with God. [*“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”*]

3. All things were made by Him ; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.

4. In Him was life ; and the life was the light of men.

5. And the light shineth in darkness ; and the darkness comprehended it not [*did not understand, seize it : when did it ever do so ?*].

[*Thursday Morning, December 20th, 1900.*]

Prayer.

WE bless Thee, eternal Father, for the hold which some men have of Thy name and throne and purpose. Pity us in our poor, superficial, and ever-dwindling faith; but yet grant unto us Thy Holy Spirit that we may see somewhat of the greatness of Thy kingdom and much of the ability of God to sustain His Church in all her history. Thou art able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think; there is no limit to God's ability, there is a limit to our capacity of response. Oh! that Thou wouldst enlarge that capacity, that we might give Thee more room in our expanded hearts. We bless Thee for everything of the nature of loveliness and music and high thinking and all things that minister to the culture and upbuilding of the soul. Take us away from all sordid and belittling things, and give us a sight of Thy kingdom, its glory, its purpose, its beneficence, its meaning through all ministries to redeem the world. We bless Thee for the redemption by blood—a mystery we cannot understand, but a mystery which the heart feels and answers in glowing love. Help us to exercise the ability which God giveth. Thou hast dealt to every man according to his several ability. May we hear Thy voice calling us stewards, trustees of the many-coloured grace of God—beautiful as a rainbow in its variety, glorious in its white holiness. Oh that Thou wouldst be with us, to comfort, encourage, sustain, and sanctify. The Lord hide us in His pavilion, the roof of which cannot be broken. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, yea, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom men took and crucified. We thank Thee for the Crucifixion, which means atonement, and for the resurrection, which means immortality. Amen.

“THE ABILITY WHICH GOD GIVETH.”

I PETER iv. 11.



HERE may be other ability; I do not know; it must be a kind of perverted selfish ability, all the divine elements taken out of it, a poor and mischievous ingenuity. The devil is not without cleverness, but it just does him no good, and does good to no one else that I am aware of. The apostles always change by elevating the level of every discussion, every consideration of human affairs. Here is a chapter full of shrewdness, sagacity, down-right healthy commonsense. The man who wrote this epistle wrote it in his best moods. It must commend itself to every one who regards commonsense as one of the fundamentals of human life and one of the essentials of human progress.

“The ability which God giveth”: a religious ability, a spiritual faculty, a way of looking at things and doing things that is not common, that traces itself back to the sanctuary and the altar, and comes forth with some redness of blood upon it. This is a mystery we cannot put into words; yet we feel it. We feel fire, though we may not be able to understand all its composition and trace all its history. “As every man hath received the gift.” That is the fundamental principle. We receive gifts; we do not invent them, we do not create them in any sense. All true gifts are gifts of God; from the Father of lights there cometh down every good and every perfect gift. A man either has the gift or he has not the gift. Why quarrel about it? why contend and confuse? A man is either a painter, or he is not a painter; I do not blame the man who is not a painter, I congratulate him if he knows the fact. “The ability which God giveth”—“received the gift.” These words

establish a kind of living spiritual communication between a giver and a receiver. What is the receiver to do? is he to boast? Certainly not; the man who has the most gifts boasts least. His very gifts save him from vanity. How is he to deport himself? The answer is given in the tenth verse: "as good stewards"—as good trustees, as qualified executors of a divine will. The man is not to act in his own name; he has to read the will, he has to master the testament in all its clauses, and to be faithful to the testator's purpose; not literally only, but spiritually, to rise above the mere words into the spiritual atmosphere of equity. Then if a man has received a gift he has to use it. That is evidently the teaching of the New Testament. How is it the teaching of the New Testament? That is proved by the parable spoken by the Master Himself. He speaks of a king distributing various gifts to his servants and representatives, and taking his journey into a far country; and in due time coming back and saying, What have you done with these gifts? what use have you made of them? One man said: Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; by industry I have made them five talents more. The second five were in the first five; there is a wonderful mystery of multiplication. We should more and more study the involution of words, and take off the wrappages one by one until we get at the enswathed soul. Another man said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents; I have gained beside them two talents more. They were both welcomed into the opening heaven, called up into the higher spaces, where the morning rises sooner than it does in these grey skies, where the day is so long as to leave no room for night. The man that received the one talent rolled it in a napkin and hid it, and kept it until his Lord's return; and then he gave the talent, not worth half what it was at the beginning, back to his Lord. Things lose by disuse. You say you will keep this or that, whether it be gift of body or of mind, and will make no use of it, but at the end, when the audit day comes, you will say, There it is. But, the fact is, it is not there. Things shrink, things are starved; memory falls into desuetude and becomes a confused and blurred recollection of things that never occurred. So it is all

through and through life. You enrich yourselves by the use of your faculties—the honest, faithful, conscientious use.

This is the argument of the Apostle Peter, whose epistle we are in part considering. "As every man hath received the gift, let him be a good steward." What of? "Of the manifold grace of God." The word "manifold" means in that case many-coloured—the vermilion and the indigo and all the colours. It is a many-coloured grace. There is nothing monotonous in God. He never gives to two men the same gift. If they are openly and patently the same gift they are not so inwardly and spiritually; each has a note of its own, a comment of its own, a subtle expressive accent, that no other man can steal or successfully duplicate.

Here, then, we are called into the great doctrine of responsibility. What is the animating thought in the apostle's mind? One likes to get back to the original impulse. There is a secret within a secret. You do this or that not because of the manifold reasons which are on the surface; all these may be only excuses, not reasons, not conclusions of the logical faculty, but something put forth that will do for the moment. What is the original impulse in Peter's fervent mind? The same impulse that was in Paul's still greater intellect. He said: Do all these things, for "the end of all things is at hand." Anybody can see beginnings—but to see the end! This is what Jesus always did. He said, Now, that is a small mustard seed; why, that may be the very smallest of seeds, but when it is grown—ay, that is the point. Not what it is patently, obviously, and just at this or that particular moment, but what is in the thing that means to be something else. What will this least of the seeds be? A church tree, a tree as big as a cathedral, with birds for choristers, and all the winds of heaven breathing music through the yielding and answering branches. Now what is the apostle at? Why is he so urgent? why does he want to get rid of the time past of his life, saying, It will suffice, let it alone, don't add to it? we have had enough of working evil. Why this haste? will not to-morrow do? The answer is, No; the

kingdom of God, the end of all things is at hand. Is that an original expression? Have I not heard it before? Yes, I have heard it before; it is one of the very first words I learned in the greatest human preaching; in very deed, there has been only one Preacher in the world. This is the first sentence in His record: "Then began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Peter then was an echo. So was the Apostle Paul. All the great workers wrought as if Jesus Christ were expected with the evening star. Do not loiter, be not idle, be not drunken; be vigilant, be sober, look about you, be alive. Why? "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." That is one of the commonplaces of mystery, if I may so phrase it. The kingdom of God is always coming, and always arriving, and always receding, and always returning; every day is an epiphany, every day is the Child born that is the son of every woman. The apostles grandly caught the spirit of their Master. They said, Jesus Christ will be here presently; He is at hand, He is almost visible; neglect no duty, discharge every obligation, regard life as a solemn responsibility, and be up! That is true; that is the spirit in which we ought to work. Work while it is called day, for the night cometh wherein no man can work. It is night in one aspect, it is the kingdom of morning in another. You shake hands with your friends and say, We will meet you to-morrow. Your friend is not at the trysting place. How is this? Here is a telegram for you. What does it say? He died an hour after he parted from you. Is the tenure of life so brittle as that? Exactly; we are tenants at will; we have no lease; it is so to say a word-of-mouth arrangement, and one of the mouths has nothing to say about it, which is the Lord's mouth. You remember that wonderful expression—"But God said, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." The man was holding a hilarious monologue, so far at least as such a narrow-minded man could be holding anything hilariously. That ghostly voice that has never been absent from the ear said to him in a whisper that chilled his marrow, Thou fool, thou fool!

What, then, have we to do with regard to this doctrine,

that all things are coming swiftly and suddenly to an end? What is the monition arising out of the declaration that the kingdom of God is at hand? It is this, that we are to do all our work as if it were the only work we have to do. Death is at the door; there is but a step between thee and death; thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. That is the atmosphere in which we have to work. We do not like it, but we did not create it, and we cannot abolish it; we can, so to say, utilise and sanctify it. Assure the fool that he has a full thousand years to live, and you may make him a greater fool still. If he is to be got at at all it is by the pressure of the immediate, the urgent, the impending, the imminent; he must be kept in a state of expectation; that expectation must have something in it of the nature of surprise and a ghostly sensitiveness that is almost a religion in itself. If the Church is to work out its mission completely it must work under the impulse of this same idea—"The end of all things is at hand." God does many things by instalments. Children are born one by one. Every man dies by himself, and for himself, and there is a point at which all companionship stands aside that the man may go on alone. Seeing that this comes to every man, and that no man knows when it may come, it is proper for him to act as if the Lord Himself might visibly—which He never will do—come to the earth and be seen in the flesh. The flesh?—He shed that garment when He rose. He now returns in the spiritual body. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body. Let the Lord come as He pleases—as an influence, as an inspiration, as a conscious process of growth and sanctification. Thy kingdom come, and come not as I will, but as Thou wilt, Thou Creator of the kingdoms.

"As every man hath received the gift." Here is individual endowment. Is that a fact? Yes, that is a fact. That is your opportunity and mine. I have been envying the endowments of a man or woman—poet, statesman, preacher—and the Lord says, Why envy? The man who has the five gifts did not give them to himself; the five talents were given by the Lord; now it is for you to remember that you—your own very, very self—you have a gift. That

should make men of us. Seeing that the image and the superscription of that gift is God's, how can we account ourselves penniless, how can we shiver as if we were orphaned and poor and driven out upon the face of the earth as mean mendicants? The question for each man to consider is, What is my one particular gift? I must burnish it, or use it, or, changing the figure, I must plant it, and set it in relation to all that spiritual chemistry which is proceeding throughout the whole creation, and who knows but that from that little root there may come something, perhaps beautiful, perhaps nutritious, perhaps fragrant? The gift is God's; let me receive it as a divine gift, and cultivate it and prize it, and not be moaning and whining and grudging in relation to other men's gifts. I should like to have five talents, says one. That shows how little we may know about the misery of gifts. Much learning may mean madness; great gifts may mean isolation. A man may have so many gifts that nobody likes to speak to him. What a life is his! Who would care to converse with Aristotle? Let you and me go out a-maying and a-blackberrying whilst that great weird *didaskalos* is turning things into metaphysical impossibilities. Do not speak to him; let us go together and do commoner work, and enjoy ourselves in the summer meads. Who knows what these great ones of the earth have to suffer? There is a wealth that comes out at the point of poverty. It is an awful thing to be too big for one class and not big enough for another. Where is that man? Money as mere lucre makes a poor report, if there be not also warbling voices, friendly salutes, loving interchanges of masonic understanding. On the whole, therefore, it may be well for each of us to be content with his gift, and to say, It is God's gift, and to treasure it as such, and to be rich, not in the gift, but in the God that gave it.

Then the apostle continues, “If any man would speak, let him speak according to the oracles of God.” Every man must have some authority for good speaking, for true witness-bearing, for holding up his flag. Even if he cannot fight, he may show under whose flag he ranges himself. Sometimes we can only speak in tendency; now and again we cannot

go further than intention, indicating what we would do if we could. That is the true aspiration. There were many little creatures—I was about to say, little bodies, but that is paying them too great a compliment—who always know what other people should do. They have a microscope—I do not know of what power—through which they look at every other man's heart. If they paid half the attention to their own hearts that they pay to yours they might in the process of millenniums become partly decent people. "Let him speak as the oracles of God"; that is to say, let him speak *ab initio*, from the beginning of things, from the incalculable ages, from the heart of the eternal Father. If a man has nothing to say but something he has invented himself, he will say it, but who will listen to it? It is the divine voice that leads. Almost every man knows true music when he hears it. There are songs that will not cease to sing. You hear them once, but that once is for ever. Quite so; they belong to the genius of things, they belong to the Divine administration; they are not so many little scattered notes, gathered up into inexpressive noise, they are notes that come up from the places that are secret, yea, from the secret places of the Most High; and people say, That is the grand amen; it absorbs the organ and calls the organ poor, because it cannot more emphatically and gloriously express the amen that calms eternity. Herein it is that the true preacher founds himself upon the inspiration of the Bible. He is emphatically a biblical preacher; he says nothing of himself, he does not always know what he is saying; the Lord takes him up and bears him away to some Chebar from whose sunny banks he sees visions of God. There is a ministry of dreams, there is a ministry of entrancement; so wondrous, so beauteous, is God's universe when it is spiritually construed and received.

The apostle says, You are going to do various things, now you must do them as the gifts and calls of God. What are you going to do? I am going to "use hospitality." The apostle says, Very well: eating and drinking should be sacramental; all bread is the Lord's body, all true wine is the Lord's blood. You are going to use hospitality? Yes, that is my in-

tention. Then use hospitality “without grudging;” do not rub the bloom off, do not take the grace away. There are some people that cannot do anything gracefully; they cannot pay you your wages without saying without words that they would not do it if they could help it. It is a curious knavery; never study it, or you may learn the unholy trick. Are you going to give the children some little refreshment and festival this Christmastime? Yes. Then do it in Christ’s name. It is a frightful thing to give only one breakfast. That ought to be exposed in the newspapers. I read that his worship the Mayor gave a breakfast yesterday. I stop there—a breakfast given yesterday! Breakfasts ought to be given daily. How very old and stale that breakfast is that was given yesterday! That is a poor way of living. And when I say that things ought to be given with a great heart cheer, with all the poetry of a great soul’s love, I mean that everything ought to be given in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ. That name turns water into wine, bronze into gold, and sets fair childhood above all the kings and kaisers of the world. Are you going to use hospitality? Then use it with properly gotten money. Do not salve your consciences by saying, I have received this money in a way that the less said about it the better, but I think I shall give the poor folks a sort of Christmas dinner, and that will as it were sanctify all that is gone before. It will not. Money has a moral history. I have been in former years invited to speak in great halls under the presidency of men who have done all in their power to create the drunkard of London, and I said, No! I do not believe in first making orphans, and then giving five hundred pounds towards keeping them. Begin at the other end. So the apostle says, If you are going to speak or to serve, then you must do all things just according to your ability, just as God has given to you. Do you know where I found some of the very sweetest words in the whole world? Not only in the Gospels, but in the Book of Leviticus. I thought, you reply, that people had given up reading that book. Some may have given it up, I still keep on with the old Book and the Old Testament.

Now what are we to give to this series of oblations

that are mentioned in this Book of Leviticus? I cannot do this or do that. Then the Lord says, "If he be poor, and cannot get so much; then he shall take . . . such as he is able to get" (Leviticus xiv. 21-2). Who would not believe in a book in which that sentence occurs? What a philosophy of human nature, what a philosophy of beneficence, what a philosophy of religion! Ah, says the poor old woman of whom I have spoken aforetime in this place, "I cannot give you a guinea a year, as the rich folks do, but I will give you sixpence a week." There is bad arithmetic that is excellent beneficence. I read in Leviticus xiv. 30, if he cannot do this and cannot get that, then "such as he can get." That will do. Again, in the same fruitful chapter, "Such as he is able to get" (Leviticus xiv. 31). I will belong to that Church; it is so large, so comprehensive, so tender-hearted, and administered by such capacious, far-sighted statesmanship. The great man brings with him his gold, and the poor little child who never saw a sixpence brings in its little daisy, and makes all heaven smile. The great musician sings his glorious song, and the poor croaking woman whose throat is choked with grief takes some rude part in the thundered doxology. But she is heard in heaven. She would sing as well as the great man if she could; she brings what she can get. If all would do this the treasury of the Church would overflow, not a single charity in the world would have to issue an appeal. Christ would no longer be a mendicant in the aisles of His own cathedrals.

Brethren, we are closing the year, a year of joy to some and of disaster to others; let us see the silver lining of the cloud, and stand up and sing, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow"!

Benediction.

Grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, make us strong and glad-hearted for ever. Amen.

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